





CONVERSATIONS

ON

T H E B I B L E,

BETWEEN

A MOTHER AND HER CHILDREN.

BY MRS. SARAH HALL.

FIFTH EDITION, IMPROVED.

PHILADELPHIA :

HARRISON HALL, No. 72 SOUTH FOURTH STREET.

.....

1837.



BS 551.

H 28

1837

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1837, by
HARRISON HALL, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the
United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

2

3126

STEREOTYPED BY J. FAGAN.....PHILADELPHIA.

1046
100

ADVERTISEMENT.

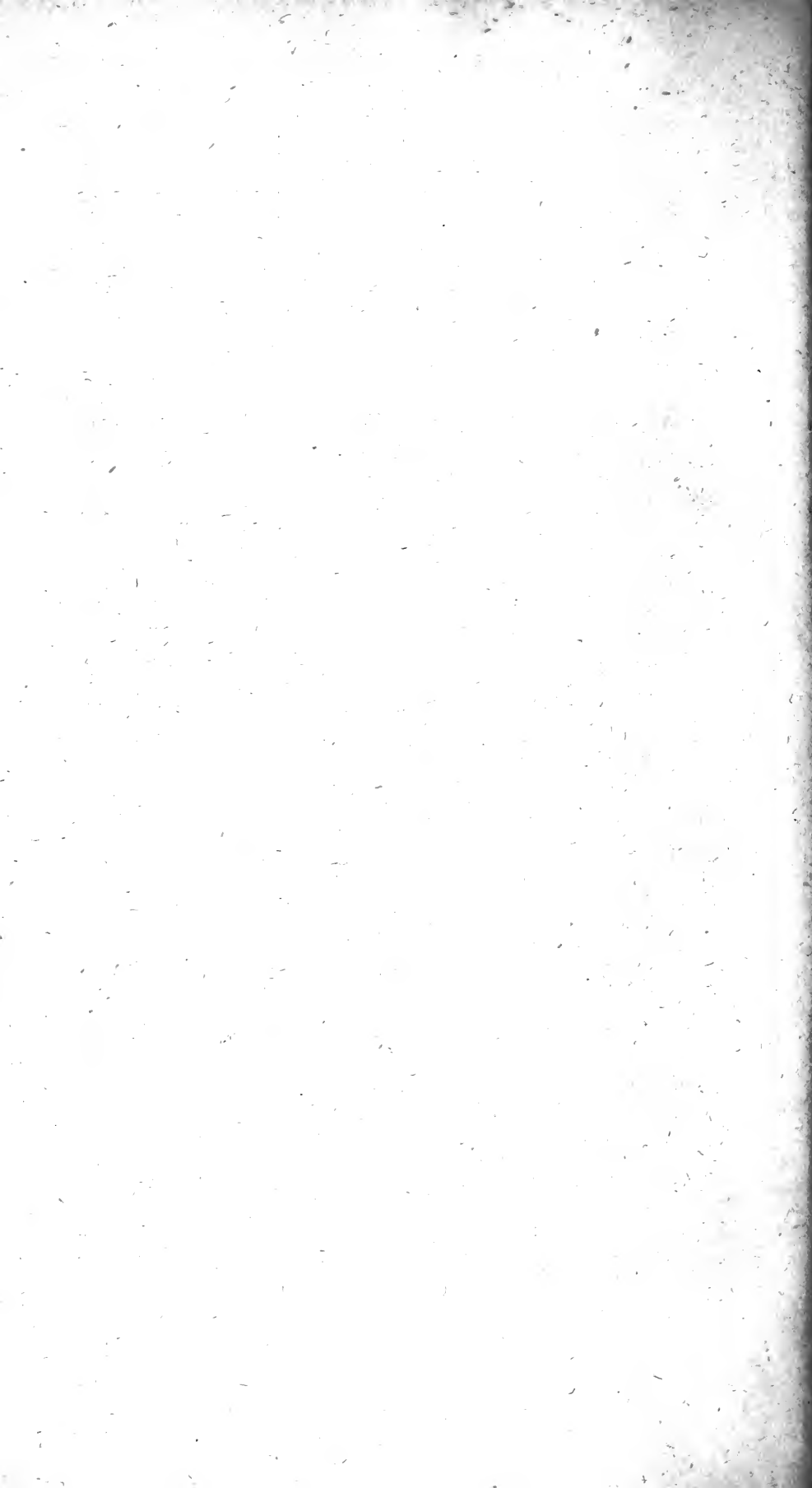
AT the urgent request of a number of the friends of the late Author, this new edition is offered to the public, under a confident hope that the CONVERSATIONS ON THE BIBLE, may be continued with the present and many succeeding generations. With that view the book is now stereotyped, for the use of schools; and the publisher has the promise of its adoption in several important seminaries of education.

The recommendations of this work from some of the first Divines of the age are confidently referred to; and its entire freedom from all sectarian bias, is a prominent characteristic in its favour.

Teachers will be supplied on very liberal terms.

PHILADELPHIA, 1837.

3



P R E F A C E.

AMIDST the splendid improvements which now dazzle the world, it is our glory to behold the Bible traversing the globe, till the "Sun of righteousness" irradiates, alike, the palace and the cottage. But while every talent is roused into action, to "prepare the way,"—while every hand is extended to "exalt every valley, and level every mountain and hill," is it not pardonable to suggest, that, even among those who are ambitious to promote the magnificent design, there are many who are but superficially acquainted with the contents of that invaluable book?

Incredible as it may seem, there is certainly an erroneous indifference to the study of the Old Testament, especially to the writings of Moses, in many persons who venerate the Scriptures as the volume of inspiration.

They reverence the New Testament as "the gospel of glad tidings," without considering, that if one is the casket, the other is the key which displays the treasure in the clearest point of view.

The value of Scripture history, as the only authentic account we possess of the earliest ages, and the most instructive mirror of man, is not yet estimated as it ought to be; for in it alone, we contemplate characters and events, recorded without prejudice or partiality. To invite young persons, who yet are unapprised of the pleasures and advantages within their reach, to begin the delightful study, the following elements are offered, with the unaffected diffidence which becomes so imperfect a work. A connected view of the principal narrative of the Scriptures, with very brief illustrations from authors of acknowledged credit, is all that is attempted. It will be perceived, that the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred volume is admitted, not argued, in the following "Conversations." Objections

which have been so often repeated that few persons have not heard them, are sometimes incidentally thrown in, either to furnish the uninformed with an answer, or to give spirit to the dialogue.

To talk in our social circles of Scripture doctrines, is now as fashionable as it is to be a member of a Bible Society; for in this age of wonders we are all philosophers and all philanthropists. The title, therefore, of this book will lead some to expect that sort of discussion to which they are every day accustomed. They will be entirely disappointed. The flippancy and temerity with which the most abstruse questions of Scripture are introduced into familiar conversation, is as irreverent as it is absurd, and ought to be discouraged. Let us endeavour to ascertain, with a seriousness corresponding to the magnitude of the subject, the authority on which these truths are given to us; and if we find, as we certainly shall, that they will bear the severest scrutiny, let us acquiesce in silence, while we humbly feel their superiority to our limited reason.

That faults may be discovered in this performance, there exists not a doubt in the mind of the author. They might, perhaps, be extenuated by apology; but those who take upon themselves the office of instructors, have little right to insist on the lenity of the public. An anonymous work may anticipate candour, because it owes nothing to the adventitious weight of reputation. Nor is there, in our liberal times, any hostility to a female pen, to be deprecated. The moral and intellectual sphere of women has been gradually enlarging with the progress of the benignant star of Christianity. But it was reserved for the nineteenth century, to honour them beyond the circle of domestic life,—to form them into societies, organized, active, and useful in the most excellent pursuits. Still let them ever remember, that whilst here, they may be permitted to emit one invigorating ray,—there, it is their duty, and their privilege to shine.

PHILADELPHIA, 1818.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

ENCOURAGED by the favourable reception of the first edition of the "Conversations on the Bible," and especially by its introduction into some very respectable schools, the Author has ventured to continue her work to the end of the Old Testament.

Whether religious education is promoted by putting the Bible into the hands of children as soon as they begin to read, has been made a question. - Some pious persons have thought that the incorrect manner in which it is read, may have a tendency to diminish that respect for the sacred writings, which is intended to be inculcated; and that the incitement of curiosity would enhance the interest of the study, should it be withheld until the intellectual powers were so far advanced that the Scriptures might be better understood. To these objections it is answered, that the hazard of postponement is much more to be dreaded, than the injury which might arise from a contrary course. Whilst children are at school, they read whatever is prescribed by their teachers. Should they remain ignorant of the Bible until they have in some measure escaped from the control of their parents and preceptors, other cares and other studies may perhaps wholly supersede this. To obviate the difficulties on either hand, the use of compilations would be the more judicious plan; and to these might be added the more simple parts of the Bible itself. There can be no question, of the utter inability of children to comprehend the fall of man and the gracious plan of his redemption, as they are delineated in the Scriptures; the poems, the prophecies, and the epistles, are far beyond their reach; but the beautiful stories that everywhere abound, may be read with advantage.

It will readily be perceived, that the pupils in the following Conversations are not supposed to be mere children, but young persons whose minds have been prepared to receive a connected scheme, or to detect an obvious objection. On the other hand, the writer has sought to avoid an error too common in the best fictitious works in our language. To fascinate the imagination of the reader with the most engaging pictures of youthful beauty, their heroes and their heroines are in the very earliest bloom of life, yet they are all *Mentors* and *Minervas*. Gifted with a prudence that is never surprised, and a perception that never deviates, their ready faculties are equal to every event, and to every occasion. How far the "Conversations on the Bible" succeed in exhibiting young persons, instructed, yet not wiser than their teachers, the public will decide.

PHILADELPHIA, 1821.

GENESIS.

Catherine. HAVE we not your promise, mother, that you would converse with us on the history of the Bible?

Fanny. I join you, Catherine, for conversation. It is to me more impressive than reading; and in this instance especially, it will diminish the trouble of travelling through so large a book.

Mother. Trouble, my dear daughter! It should be the greatest pleasure, as it is your unspeakable privilege, to possess and be able to read that book. Your curiosity should be awakened, to desire a more intimate knowledge of a record, which speaks truth without error, and opens to man his origin and destiny. You will find it not less entertaining than instructive.

Fanny. That is all very true, I confess. I never fail to find entertainment in the Bible as well as instruction. Yet whenever I undertake to read it regularly through, I am interrupted by many things I cannot understand. What I want, then, is a simple connected narrative of the story, with its general relation to the several parts of the Bible.

Mother. I will endeavour to give you such a view, though I may not accomplish it so well as I could desire. The subject is exceedingly interesting; for the Bible is not only the oldest book in existence, but it contains an account of the creation of all things, and a history of mankind from the beginning. To read it regularly through, however, is not the most advantageous manner of collecting its substance or design; for the books are not all placed in the order of time in which they were written, and in some instances they are so arranged as to interrupt the narrative. Yet no part is irrelevant as you have suspected, but everything contributes to one ultimate end. You have been habituated to the reading of this invaluable

able work, so that, in a very brief narrative of its contents, I must necessarily repeat a great deal that you already know.

Catherine. I often think I am acquainted with the whole ; but when we are examined, we all discover our ignorance. A general view of the story and system, I think, would impress our memory, and enable us better to understand the several parts ; for you will admit that the Bible is a difficult book,—even the import of the name is not obvious.

Mother. All that we are required to understand, as a rule either of faith or of practice, is abundantly clear. Some doctrines are indeed mysterious ; but as we can prove them to have proceeded from infinite wisdom, we may well yield our assent, although we are unable to reduce them to the level of our finite minds. They may be mysterious, because they are in their nature incomprehensible to us. There is, nevertheless, this advantage in the communication, that the curiosity which they excite, impels every faculty of the mind to the study of the Scriptures ; and our faith in the divine veracity, moreover, is exercised. Were we more fully acquainted, than we are, with the manners of the people to whom they were originally addressed, apparent difficulties would vanish. Many have already been dissipated, by the arduous labours and indefatigable diligence of a succession of learned travellers and philosophers, who have explored the scene of action, and examined the languages and customs. The permanency of these, in that country, contributes effectually to the explanation of difficult passages in the sacred writings, which are found, in reality, to be obscured only by our ignorance. Places are at this moment identified, in many instances, by the same names, or by names very similar to those by which they were known in the earliest times ; and relative narrations are elucidated by the manners and traditions of the inhabitants. As to the word BIBLE, your brother, though so many years younger than you are, has the advantage of you. I dare say he can tell you the meaning of the word.

Charles. The name is taken from the Greek word *Biblos*, which signifies a *book*.

Mother. Yes. **THE BIBLE** is *the book* by way of eminence, indicating its superior excellence and authority. It consists of two parts, the **OLD** and the **NEW TESTAMENT**, which are connected by a chain of predictions, many of them unquestionably fulfilled; the event and the prophecy, thus mutually explaining each other.

The **OLD TESTAMENT** was chiefly written in the Hebrew language,—and the **NEW**, with the exception, perhaps, of the gospel by Matthew, in Greek. They are subdivided into books; composed by different hands and in different ages throughout the long period of sixteen hundred years, yet forming a whole, harmonious in all its parts; because the writers were divinely taught, and their labours were all directed to one end, namely, to show the defection of man from the righteousness in which he was created, and the consequent forfeiture of eternal life. The total and uniform depravity of his heart from that moment, and the mode of his restoration by the unmerited favour of the Sovereign Creator and Disposer of all things,—through a Redeemer.

Connected with and illustrating this one grand design, the Bible gives us a history of the creation of the world, and the rise and fall of nations, the origin of languages and the arts, and a variety of particulars, of which we have no other account which bears the credible marks of authenticity. The Bible consists of narrative and doctrine, precept and prophecy. The importance and sublimity of each, would alone demonstrate their divine origin, if external evidence were wanting. But of this too there is more than enough. The sacred books have been subjected to the most enlightened and candid scrutiny of their friends, and to the persevering malignity of their enemies. Many of these latter have been competent to the detection of imposture. They have objected, and their objections have been shown to be nugatory. The Bible stands unblemished, and the Christian can say with confidence, “The Lord will not forsake the work of his own hands.”

Prophecy is unquestionably the most obscure portion of the Scriptures; yet is it sufficiently plain, to form the chief argument of their divinity. Its predictions are far beyond the penetration of human intellect; and the accomplish-

ment of these predictions is so multiplied and exact, as no art of man or combinations of men could achieve. The most hardened infidelity is compelled to refer both the prescience and the power, to something more than human.

But our business being with the *contents*, I shall not speak of *the evidence in favour of the Scriptures*. You have been taught to receive them as the word of God. Take it for granted, then, that what you shall hear in the course of our conversations is the truth. Yet you are not to build your faith upon my word. It is your duty, to examine for yourselves, when your minds shall be matured. In the mean time, rest assured, that whenever the arguments by which the Scriptures are defended shall be considered, their force will be found irresistible, and the study most delightful to a mind properly disposed.

Fanny. If the accomplishment of a prophecy occur, I hope it will comport with your plan to point it out. I should like to see the fulfilment of the promises.

Mother. That, my children, we shall all see. We may behold it every day, if we are not wilfully blind. May it be your lot, to enjoy the blessings which those promises, in their highest import, have offered to your acceptance! With respect to subordinate events, their prediction and their fulfilment are so interwoven with the narrative, that separation would be destruction; and the same must be premised of the miracles of the Old Testament. You will, therefore, hear much of these interesting subjects.

The first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses, the great Jewish legislator. Taken collectively, they are called the Pentateuch. They commence with Genesis, which, in reference to the subject, signifies *Creation*; because it relates the history of the creation of all things.

Genesis contains the history of 2369 years; and informs us, first, that the Earth was created in six days by the almighty *word* of God. (B. C. 4004.) "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;" and the same unerring wisdom pronounced it perfect: so perfect, that we are told, in a beautiful figure, the morning stars beheld it with songs, and acclamations of joy.—Job, xxxviii, 7.

Every part of nature, both animate and inanimate, bears the impress of order; and thus it was in the beginning. All things did not start into existence at once, but successively. The original matter of which they were formed, was produced first, by the omnipotent Word. The spirit of God moved upon the elemental chaos, and light and darkness became day and night! Earth, air, and water, separated, and took their destined places; the sun and moon began their revolutions; and the shining stars were arranged in the firmament. Herbs, trees, and flowers, sprang next from the ground; the capacious bosom of the deep received its inhabitants; and the feathered tribes expanded their wings in air. Thus in five days our world came progressively from the Creator's hand. But supreme Wisdom does not work in vain. Every product of His mind must have an aim and end. The flowers would bloom and the fruits would cluster in vain, without a hand to gather them. Creation would display its magnificence in vain, without an intelligent creature to contemplate the Creator's glory in his works. Wherefore, on the sixth day, Man, the noblest of all, was produced; and to him came all the inferior animals, and he named them and governed them.

Every created being was furnished with a capacity to enjoy the Creator's beneficence, according to its nature. To man alone was imparted an intellectual power to admire and adore, at the same time that he enjoyed. All earth and air contributed to *his* pleasure, but there was none to participate; no being who could unite with him in gratitude to the author, or who could receive and return the social affections with which his soul was endued. But in this lonely state he did not long continue! He was cast into a deep sleep; and when he awaked, he beheld a companion, in all respects suited to his circumstances. "This is now bone of my bones, (said Adam) and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called *woman*, because she was taken out of *man*. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

The Mosaic account of the creation has been admired by the most accomplished scholars. The emphatical sen-

tence by which the instantaneous production of light is described, has often been cited as an example of the highest sublimity. And God said, "Let there be light,—and there was light." How exquisitely expressive of the grandeur of that power and wisdom, which could *speak* into existence a substance, at once so astonishing and so useful!

The seventh day, the glorious Architect rested from his labours; and therefore he "blessed and sanctified" that day. By these words, we understand the appointment of a *Sabbath*, or a reservation to himself of one day in seven, for his special service, and at the same time for the refreshment of his creatures by a total cessation of their labours.*

The division of time into weeks, which has been handed down to us from time immemorial, can no otherwise be accounted for, than in the divine ordinance here recorded; for the period is entirely arbitrary, not being indicated by any aspect of nature, like days, months, and years, by the revolutions of the sun and moon.

Adam and Eve† were placed in the garden of Eden, a paradise abounding with all that was delightful to the eye, or delicious to the taste. The splendour of creation, and the bountiful provision for their enjoyment, might intimate to them the existence of a Creator and a Benefactor; but the highest exercise of their mental powers could ascertain but little of his nature, or of their own obligations. This transcendent knowledge required a divine revelation; and by a divine revelation they learned that their Creator was their *Sovereign*, entitled to their service, and implicit obedience to his will. The first pair, created innocent, and with all holy inclinations, might suppose themselves able to pay the requisite submission; but being endowed with perfect freedom of choice, the Sovereign thought fit to

* All nations, not absolutely savage, seem to have some knowledge of a Sabbath. Hints of a seventh day Sabbath are found in the most ancient heathen writers. We possess no blessing for which we ought to be more profoundly thankful, than for this day of *rest*. Those only who experience its many uses, both to society and the church, can tell the amount of our obligation. Without a Sabbath, there would be little or no religion in the world.

† A word signifying *Life*, and therefore chosen by Adam as the name of his wife, because she was "the mother of all living."

prove them by one positive command. Accordingly, he prohibited the use of a certain tree in the midst of the garden, in these words: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." A forbidden object becomes desirable to our perverse hearts, from the very circumstance of its being forbidden; but such perversity cannot be supposed of the first pair, in their original state of rectitude. Listening to the insidious suggestions of Satan, the great enemy of their peace, they were tempted to believe, that the tree of knowledge was withheld because it possessed the power of exalting their natures to an equality with angelic beings. Ambition superseded duty: they ate of the interdicted fruit! The condition of life and happiness was broken, and the penalty of death was incurred! The guilty pair were exiled from paradise, where they had been fed by the spontaneous fruits of the earth; and they were condemned to earn their bread with toil, and in sorrow.

Fanny. Was not the punishment severe for the breach of one command; that too an act by which no creature was injured?

Mother. The command was the test of an obedient disposition: the breach of this was, therefore, the violation of every other; because the rebellious temper was displayed. The Sovereign has a right to exact perfect obedience, and man is justly punished for his refusal to render it. But man is not left in despair: Divine Mercy had, from all eternity, laid the plan of his deliverance from the power and penalty of sin, by a *Redeemer*; and he now intimated the blessed hope, by a promise to the fallen pair.

Fanny. You called the command not to eat of the tree, a *positive* command. Are not all the laws of God equally binding?

Mother. Certainly: but we divide them into moral and positive. The first include the duties which we owe to our Creator, or to ourselves, and each other, and which our own reason might, in some measure, have discovered: the second are such as derive their importance from the will of the supreme lawgiver, and such as we could not have

known without a divine revelation. You will keep this distinction in mind; for in the study of the Scriptures, you will find frequent examples of the positive, under the Jewish dispensation, and two under our own,—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Catherine. Where was the garden of Eden situated?

Mother. Eden was a very fertile tract of country, as it is thought by many, not far from the Persian Gulph, and between what are now called Bagdad and Bassora. The garden of Paradise, with the river Euphrates running through it, is supposed to have been planted where *Arecca* now stands.*

The first descendants of Adam and Eve were Cain and Abel. Cain cultivated the earth, and Abel tended flocks. At an appointed time,† each offered a sacrifice: that of Abel was accepted, while Cain's was rejected.

Fanny. How did God testify his pleasure on that occasion?

Mother. The manner is not certain. The distinction, however expressed, was made evident to the mind of Cain; for it inflamed him with rage, and, instead of attending to the suggestion of his Creator, that he too might be accepted, if he presented his offering in faith and obedience, his jealousy instigated him to the murder of his innocent brother. Some divines have imagined that his mother believed she had received in him, the first-born, the fulfilment of the consoling promise of a Redeemer, and instilled such an idea into his mind. When, therefore, he saw his younger brother preferred, he was tempted to remove him from the possibility of enjoying his birth-right. You may remember to have heard our excellent preacher, not long ago, taking occasion, from this hypothesis, to caution mothers against nourishing the mischievous seeds of pride in their children; for thus early we have to lament the sad effects of Adam's disobedience, in the depravity of his children, who were formed, not like Adam originally, "in the image of God,"

* The situation of Paradise is a point of great controversy among the learned.

† "In process of time," or, "at the end of days"—as the words may be literally translated, and are translated in the marginal reading, seem to signify stated worship at the end of six days.

but like him in his *fallen state* with inclinations averse from good.

Catherine. What is meant by a *sacrifice*?

Mother. Sacrifice generally means an offering made to the Deity as an acknowledgment of his power, and a payment of that homage which is due to Him. *Eucharistical* sacrifices, or thanksgivings, were offered in Paradise; those which are called *expiatory*, were not instituted till Adam had transgressed the law of his Creator, and had learned, that without an *atonement* he could not be pardoned. That this sentiment has generally prevailed, we discover in the fact, that sacrifices have been found amongst the religious rites of all nations, before their conversion to Christianity. We have no direct account of the origin of this mode of worship; but we hesitate not to pronounce it of divine authority, because Adam was taught immediately by his Creator. And without a command, it is highly probable he would not have thought of destroying the animals committed to his care, nor would he have imagined, that an offering, apparently so cruel, could be acceptable to a Being, whose benevolence was impressed on all around him.

The *translation of Enoch*, in the order of events, next arrests our attention. He was a descendant of Seth, the third son of Adam, who was given to Eve to console her for the loss of Abel, and whose family continued a long time in the practice of a pure religion. This pious man, pious in the midst of universal corruption, was translated to heaven when 365 years of age (B. C. 3017), without suffering the pain of dying. This remarkable event would intimate, to a people destitute as yet of a written revelation, and guided only by the partial light of tradition, that both the souls and bodies of the righteous would find a glorious reward.

The life of man, at this time, was protracted to a great length. Methuselah, the oldest of whom we have any account and who died in the year of the flood, lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. (B. C. 2348.) The earth then would be rapidly peopled; and wickedness appears to have arrived at a great height about this time; for, in the year of the world 1656, all mankind were swept

away by a flood, because the earth was filled with violence, and the imagination of man's heart was only evil continually. From this most awful judgment, one righteous man, with his family was preserved. Noah, the great-grandson of Enoch, was commanded by God to build an ark, or vessel, and to go into it with his wife, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their wives; and to take with them also cattle and fowls, and creeping things, of every description, that they might be kept alive. Of clean birds and beasts, seven pairs, and of unclean, two.

Catherine. All the creatures being alike the production of a holy God, why are any called *unclean*?

Mother. The term is here first used, and no reason is given. From subsequent scriptures we learn, that *clean* animals were such as might be used in sacrifice; *unclean* were of the kinds forbidden. In the ceremonial laws of the Israelites, of which we shall speak by and by—we find a similar discrimination with respect to their food.

Fanny. It would seem impossible to construct a vessel sufficiently capacious to contain such a multitude of creatures, together with the provision necessary for their subsistence.

Mother. The Mosaic history has been assailed at all points; and your difficulty, more obvious than many which have been objected, has not been overlooked. Moses gives the dimensions of the ark, and men who were qualified for the task, have calculated that it was adequate to its purpose. The great length of time required to construct a vessel of sufficient strength and dimensions, to contain so many living creatures, and to resist a deluge of waters, afforded an opportunity to the sentenced race, to return to their long-suffering Sovereign, had they been so inclined.

Charles. How long was Noah employed in building the Ark?

Mother. Moses has not told us; nor has he left sufficient data, to enable us to calculate with certainty. Subsequent writers have therefore disagreed on this point. Some say, a hundred years. Others think, even a longer period. While the Ark was preparing, he warned his contemporaries of the impending calamity; but no peni-

tence appeared to avert the divine wrath, and "in the six hundredth year of Noah's age, in the second month and the seventeenth day of the month, were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and it rained forty days, and all the high hills and all the mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered, and all flesh died that moved upon the earth."

Charles. I think the hills must have been comparatively very low. Forty days of rain would not cover our high hills, much less our mountains.

Mother. You forget, my son, that the deluge is not said to have been effected by the rain alone. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up." We do not know the precise manner of this awful event, but we can imagine vast torrents of water bursting from the bowels of the earth to be designed by the phrase. The amount of these, added to the rain, we cannot calculate; but that they did surround the globe, even to the highest point of land, is proved by appearances existing at this day, which can be accounted for, only on the supposition of an universal deluge.

Fanny. I should like to know what you allude to, because I wish to have no scruples respecting any part of the Bible.

Mother. I will mention some. Vegetable matter, which must have grown on the surface of the earth, is now found at great depths below it. Marine plants, skeletons of fishes, and vast quantities of shells, are found buried in the summits of high mountains in various parts of the world. Bones too of animals, the natives of one climate, are discovered in another, where they could not have existed in a living state. How all these things could have been deposited in places so extraordinary, we never could have known, had not Moses recorded the history of the flood.

Charles. Mother, I do not yet understand your proofs.

Mother. It is natural, my son, to suppose, that the affrighted creatures, both man and beast, would flee for security to the highest points of land in their respective districts, while the waters were rapidly rising around

them. The immense power of these might carry some of the animals along with them, to places very distant from their native soil. Fish and vegetables might sink into the chasms formed by "the fountains of the great deep breaking up;"—and there they are found at this day. It is no unreasonable imagination, that these deposits were intended for the very purpose which they now subserve,—a continuing evidence of the truth of the Mosaic history.

Fanny. This is a curious subject. I suppose I might learn more of it than I know, from the Bible, if I read more attentively than I do. But you, mother, can tell us how long Noah remained in the ark.

Mother. I am always pleased with the expression of your curiosity. I will gratify it, by relating some particulars respecting the flood.

The seventeenth day of the second month, when the rain began, answers to the seventh of December, as some learned men calculate, and to the beginning of November, as others reckon. The waters from the clouds and from the hidden sources in the earth, increased the flood for one hundred and fifty days, or five months, until it had risen about twenty-seven feet above the top of the highest mountains. About the beginning of May the waters began to abate, and about the end of it, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. Toward the end of July, the tops of the mountains were seen, and on the twenty-seventh day of the second month (the eighteenth of December) Noah and his family went out from the ark, where they had been a year and ten days.

Charles. In what part of the world are these memorable mountains situated?

Catherine. Ararat, it is generally thought, is a mountain of Armenia, in Asia, a part of a chain, called Caucasus.

Mother. The country is high. It is said to have been at that time very fertile, and therefore most suitable for the first habitation of man, after the flood. The period of time from the creation to the flood, embraces sixteen hundred and fifty-six years; and is called by chronologists the first age of the world.

Charles. Were the years of the antediluvians like ours, containing each three hundred and sixty-five days? Perhaps they were months. Only think,—Methusaleh lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. What a prodigious length of time!

Mother. They were literally years. The numbers recorded by Moses can, on no other hypothesis, be reconciled with his history. The age even of the oldest man, reduced to months, would not equal the period allotted to many in our own day; and that of others would dwindle into comparative childhood.

Charles. I suppose their climate was more healthful than ours.

Mother. The earth may have been more healthful before the flood, than it has been since, or it may be, that a vegetable diet might contribute to lengthen life. From the words spoken to Noah, when he took possession of the new earth, “Every moving thing that liveth shall be *meat* for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things,” it would seem, that animal food had not been allowed to man before the deluge. But whatever may have been the means of longevity, the design is evident. Having no written language, a greater number of contemporary witnesses, might, by tradition, hand down the history of the creation and subsequent events.

Methuselah having lived with Adam two hundred and forty-three years, and with Shem, the son of Noah, ninety-seven; and again, Shem living to the days of Abraham, the history might be carried on with certainty and precision. Still, the account of the first ages does not rest solely on the memory or veracity of the antediluvian patriarchs. Moses, as you will find by and by, was favoured with an intimate communication with the Creator, by whom he was inspired, and who alone could reveal the history of the creation, and the arrangement of matter,—events which were anterior to the existence of any human being.

The first act which Noah performed, after he descended from the ark, was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice. Nothing, surely, could have been more natural or becoming, than to express his gratitude for a deliverance so ex-

ceedingly wonderful ! We sometimes see extreme distress brought on a small district of country by a partial inundation ; but how faint an emblem of that universal destruction of mankind, in a flood that involved the whole terrestrial globe !

The mercy of his Divine Preserver did not stop here. He graciously assured Noah, that he would not again sweep mankind from the face of the earth. But so long as it remained, his creatures should continue to enjoy and to cultivate it, through the vicissitudes of time ; “that seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night should not cease.” To confirm the faith of man in His promise, He “set his bow in the cloud,” and directed the family of Noah to behold that beautiful arch, as a token of the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature ; that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Fanny. Do you think, mother, that a rainbow had never been seen before that time ? Surely it had rained before the deluge.

Mother. There are two opinions, my dear, on this question ; but no person can now determine, which is the more correct. Some suppose the rainbow to have always appeared, under the same circumstances in which we behold it at the present day, and that it was merely pointed out on the present occasion, as the memorial of a promise. Others believe, that this beautiful object was now first produced, and for this particular purpose. “Though it had rained,” say they, “before the deluge, yet the superintending Providence, which caused the rainbow to appear as a pledge of the assurance that he gave, (that the world should never more be destroyed by water,) might have prevented the concurrence of such circumstances in the time of rain, as were essentially necessary for the formation of a bow. It might have rained when the sun was set, or when he was more than fifty-four degrees high, when no bow could be seen ; and the rain might continue, between the spectator and the sun, until the clouds were expended, or in any other direction, but that of an opposition to the sun.”

So many circumstances are necessary to coincide, for

the formation of a rainbow, that even now it appears in but few of the rains, which our beneficent Preserver showers down, to fertilize the land and render the air salubrious.

The Supreme Being, having condescended to promise by a covenant, that he would be the Protector of his creatures, continued to manifest his superintendence, both general and particular, by a variety of means, but more especially by a series of prophecies. These supernatural intimations of the divine will, from the first obscure ray which cheered our fallen parents in Paradise, to the full blaze of gospel light, harmonious in their tendency, and progressive in their clearness, besides their relation to the intermediate dispensations of Providence, still pointed to their ultimate end. They kept up the expectation of an extraordinary person, who should deliver mankind from the curse incurred by disobedience, both on him, and, for his sake, on the earth which he inhabited.

Lamech, for example, seems to have imagined, that he had received the promised benefactor, when, on the birth of his son Noah, he exclaims, "this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toils of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." And Noah, alluding to the same hope, in the blessing pronounced on his children, distinguishes his son Shem, as being favoured with some peculiar relationship to the Deity, in these words: "Blessed be the *LORD God of Shem.*" Noah was singularly honoured, as we have seen, and Shem became the progenitor of God's peculiar people.

Noah, having been a preacher of righteousness to the old world, became a prophet to the new, being enlightened to foretel the future fortunes of his children. On Shem and Japhet, who were virtuous persons and dutiful sons, he pronounced a blessing,—while Ham is assured, that he should be a "servant of servants to his brethren."

Fanny. Then Ham, I suppose, did not deserve a blessing?

Mother. You are right. The Supreme Disposer of events is always just. Ham had himself a bad disposition; but his posterity, who were chiefly implicated in the prophecy, were abominably wicked. Prophecies are sel-

dom to be understood of single persons: they generally comprehend whole nations; as you will find, when you come to study them. We shall notice them now, only when they elucidate the history in which we are engaged.

Charles. I have heard one of our professors say, that Ham became black, in consequence of the curse pronounced upon him by his father; and thus he accounts for the colour of the Africans, his posterity.

Mother. Your professor, my dear, has no authority for his opinion; nor need we undertake to discuss the question. Let us confine ourselves chiefly to the letter of Scripture, and if we cannot there discover the causes of difference in the colour of the human family, we can with certainty account for the varieties in language. There we learn, that though mankind had greatly multiplied after the flood, "they were yet of *one language and of one speech*," until, finding themselves straitened for room in the hilly countries of Armenia, where, it is generally thought, they had first settled when they descended from the ark, they began to spread over the adjacent lands. Travelling westward, they came to a plain called Shinar, and on the spot, as it is supposed, where the city of Babylon afterwards stood, they began to build a city and a tower, whose top should reach the heavens, to perpetuate their name to succeeding generations. But God, who does not always favour the designs of ambitious men, was pleased to send among these projectors, such a confusion of languages, that they could not understand one another; and the place was called Babel, which imports *confusion*. One tie, identity of speech, which had hitherto held together the great family of Noah, being now dissolved, they dispersed yet further with less reluctance. Still, as the number of mankind was comparatively small, it is not to be supposed, that they could at once form very extensive settlements. The children of Shem remained in Asia, and those of Ham are still found in Africa: Mizraim, his grandson, led colonies into Egypt, and founded a powerful kingdom; whence Egypt is sometimes called the *land of Ham*.

Europe was the portion of Japhet; and he, at least, must have practised the art of ship-building, which they

had learned from Noah, their progenitor ; for, without it, he could not have taken possession of the isles of the Mediterranean sea, included in his lot. Petty monarchies, called Patriarchal, in which the head of each family was both its chief and its king, then prevailed. Nimrod is the first person mentioned, who founded a kingdom. He began his reign by building the stupendous city of Babylon, on the Euphrates.

Fanny. What was the primitive language ?

Mother. The Hebrew, it is generally supposed. The Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Arabic, have contended for priority ; but the Hebrew has the better claim. The Old Testament is written in the Chaldee character, but what we call the Samaritan is thought by many to be the most ancient Hebrew letter.

No event of importance, after the miracle at Babel, is recorded, till the calling of Abram, a descendant of Shem. The birth of Terah, his father, concludes the second age of the world.

During this lapse of ages, the knowledge of the Deity had become greatly obscured and debased by ignorance and idolatry ; for no written law was yet given, but, orally, a few moral and ceremonial precepts. To transmit, therefore, to posterity, the knowledge of one God and his essential attributes, and to preserve in symbols and prophecies the promise of a Saviour, the particular family, of which, at the appointed time, he was to come, was now to be separated from the gentile world. The principal subject then of the Old Testament, from this epoch, is the history of this distinct and highly favoured people. They were called Hebrews, either from Eber, their ancestor, who was the great-grandson of Shem, or, more probably, from the fact that they came from *beyond* (in the Hebrew language, *eber* signifies *beyond*) the Euphrates. In latter times, they have been known by the name of Jews.

As the founder of this nation, Abram, the son of Terah, and the tenth from Noah, was selected and commanded by God to leave Chaldea, his native country, and go into the land of Canaan, the inheritance of his posterity, "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed." (B. C. 1921.)

Charles. Was this a repetition of the promise made to our first parents?

Mother. A blessing so extensive could mean no less. But it is not to be supposed that it was clearly understood by Abram, who, at that time, had no child; and both he and his wife were old. Yet he did not hesitate to believe him who he knew would find means to make good his promise.

Some years before his death, Terah had come with his family from Chaldea to Haran, in Mesopotamia, and died there. After his death, Abram, and Lot, the grandson of Terah, proceeded to the land of Canaan; and they pitched their tents first at a place called Sichem, (in our day, Nablous, or Napolose,) and afterwards further south, at Bethel. At each place, we observe, they left an altar, the monument of their piety.

A famine which greatly afflicted Canaan, in the following year, (B. C. 1920) obliged Abram to go with his family into Egypt for subsistence. When they arrived at the border of that country, forgetting for a moment his accustomed confidence in divine Providence, Abram requested Sarai, his wife, to call herself his sister, lest her beauty might be fatal to him; and she consented to this deception. When they came into Egypt, and resided near the court, the princes saw her, and spoke of her in admiration before the king. This was enough to determine her fate. She was immediately conducted to the palace, according to the still prevailing custom of oriental despots, whom no law restrains. Her supposed brother was respectfully treated for her sake. But great afflictions fell upon the royal family; and Pharaoh, who seems not to have been ignorant of a superintending providence, understood that they were the punishment of his injustice to the strangers. He ordered Abram therefore into his presence, and very properly reproved him,—Why hast thou brought these evils on me? Why saidst thou she is my sister, so I might have taken her to be my wife: she is thine; take her and go thy way. And he charged his servants to dismiss them honourably, with all their possessions.

The same year, after the famine had ceased, Abram, with his wife and his nephew, returned to their former

residence near Bethel. But their flocks were become so numerous, that they could no longer remain together. The ground they occupied was insufficient for their support, and disputes frequently arose between their herdsmen. That they might not themselves be involved in contention, these primeval shepherds agreed to separate. Lot accordingly journeyed on towards the river Jordan, and pitched his tents on a fertile plain, watered by that celebrated stream.

Lot was still in the territory of the Canaanites, the descendants of Ham, who, as I hinted just now, were by this time abandoned to vices of every description. Exemplary judgments had been denounced against them, and these the Sovereign Avenger began now to execute. But the virtue of Lot was regarded with singular favour. Two angels, in the character of travellers, were commissioned to tell him that Sodom, the city of his residence, would be consumed by fire from heaven, and to direct him to repair with his family to the mountains. He obeyed; and thus, with his two daughters, was preserved; whilst his wife, heedless of an express command, "not to look back," lingered. Bewailing, perhaps, her unworthy city and friends, she forgot the injunction, and "was turned into a pillar of salt."

Charles. Is that metamorphosis supposed to be literally true?

Mother. The words of Moses are often metaphorically understood by infidels to serve their own impious ends; but as his history was written for the instruction of the common people, and all classes were commanded to teach it to their children, we can seldom admit of figures beyond their comprehension. In this case, however, commentators have found several interpretations to explain the difficulty. It is enough for us to know, that she was punished for *disobedience*; and let us remember the example of Lot's wife, whenever we are tempted to transgress a known command!

Five populous cities with all their inhabitants were utterly destroyed by this judgment, and a remarkable lake now covers the soil where once they flourished — the lasting monument of that tremendous event!

Catherine. You mean, I suppose, the lake Asphaltites ; or, in more modern language, the Dead Sea. But why do you call it a remarkable lake ?

Mother. Because its appearance and properties are really so, independently of the fables to which it has given rise. It has been called the *Dead* sea, for example, because its waters were supposed to have a fatal influence on animal and vegetable life. Modern travellers have detected the fallacy of this opinion.

Catherine. How is it ascertained that it flows where Sodom once stood ?

Mother. The site is described with sufficient precision by Moses ; the Arabs who dwell on its borders acknowledge it, and, according to some writers, call it " the sea of Lot." Mr. *Maundrel*, who has written an account of *A Journey to Aleppo*, was even told by two aged persons of probity, that they had actually seen pillars, and other fragments of buildings in the water near the shore, but he could not discover them.

Let us now return to Abram, who, soon after the departure of his nephew, had removed his tents from Bethel, and had taken up a temporary residence on the plains of Mamre. Here the promise which had been intimated to him, was repeated, and in more explicit terms. His name was changed to *Abraham*, and that of his wife to *Sarah*.* " I will bless her," said the divine oracle, " and give thee a son of her (B. C. 1897,) and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and she shall be a mother of nations, and kings of people shall be of her. Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates ; they shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance."

Charles. Had the natives been acquainted with these

* Hebrew names, unlike ours, which are entirely arbitrary, were significant. Abraham and Sarah, our philologists translate, " the heads or progenitors of a multitude," according with the spirit of the annexed prophecy.

prophecies, they would not have suffered this distinguished stranger to remain among them.

Mother. Perhaps not. But his character and immense riches procured him respect. He must have been an eminent person at this time, for we read of his taking three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in his house, to rescue his kinsman Lot, who had been seized with all his goods, at the sacking of Sodom, in a quarrel amongst the petty princes of the vale of Siddim.

Journeying still farther south, Abraham came into Philistia on the border of the Mediterranean, and halted near Gerar, the residence of the king. Again he was tempted to represent the fair Sarah as his sister, and a second time she was taken to the palace; but Abimelech, yet unconscious of the wrong he had done, was warned in a dream—"Thou art but a dead man for the woman whom thou hast taken—for she is a man's wife," was the appalling sentence. With unfeigned horror the terrified prince received it, and appealed to Omniscience—"In the innocence of my heart have I done this. Said he not unto me, she is my sister? and she—even she herself said, he is my brother. Lord, wilt thou also slay a righteous nation?" "Restore the man his wife," said his just Judge, "for he is a prophet and shall pray for thee and thou shalt live. But if thou restore her not, thou shalt die, thou and all thy house." In the morning early, therefore, Abimelech collected his servants and related his dream, and sent for the strangers and reprehended them both; inquiring wherein he had offended, that they should lead him into such imminent danger; or what evil disposition they had seen in him to justify their suspicion of his integrity? "Because I thought," replied the timid husband, "surely, the fear of God is not in this place, and they will slay me for my wife's sake, and yet indeed she is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother."

Catherine. I hope Abraham was not really married to his sister?

Mother. Not his sister as we understand that appellation, but as it is commonly used in scripture, where relatives of the same stock are called brethren, or sisters,

though not children of the same father and mother. Taking advantage of this custom, Abraham imagined he might with impunity defend himself by a mental reservation.

Catherine. But in his case it was a duty to tell the whole truth, because his concealment of a part not only exposed him to the danger of losing his wife, but entangled the king, who it appears was an upright man.

Mother. The vicious state of public morals had not permitted Abraham to hope that he should again find such disinterested virtue, united with power, as he had seen in Pharaoh. But the king of Gerar was equally just, and yet more liberal: for together with Sarah, he sent large presents to Abraham, of cattle and servants and silver; and nobly offered him the choice of his whole domain to settle wheresoever he pleased. Thus by his piety and munificence he obtained the prayers of Abraham, and the blessing of heaven.

You may perhaps think, my children, that I speak with lenity of the errors of this distinguished patriarch in the two instances I have related. It is not for me to soften or disguise the characters I present to you. The scriptures have not done it. They show us that the best of men were fallible. I have told you the facts, and the reasoning by which Abraham excused himself—but he was not innocent. No deviation from the truth can be justified. The little artifices by which we think to advance our own interests, often recoil upon ourselves. What must have been the remorse of Abraham when he found himself surpassed in uprightness by two heathen kings!

The following year the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, was verified in the birth of Isaac; the father was in the hundredth year of his age, and his wife in her ninetieth, at this period.

The patriarch had now dwelt at Gerar some years in such high prosperity that the Philistines, ascribing it properly to the particular favour of Heaven, were anxious to secure his friendship. To obtain this favour the prince himself, attended by his general, made a visit to their illustrious guest; and courteously reminding him of the kindness he had received, entreated, that he would engage

not to use his power to the injury of the people who had so hospitably entertained him. A treaty of friendship was accordingly made, and Abraham made use of the opportunity to inform the king that he had been violently deprived of a well near the place of their present meeting by the herdsmen of Abimelech. The right was acknowledged at once, and the well ever afterwards called *Beer-Sheba*, or the well of the oath, because it was the place where a covenant was ratified by an oath.

At Beer-Sheba, the family of Abraham continued at least till the twenty-fifth year of Isaac's age; for there we find them when the latter became the subject of a most affecting story.

Charles. Do not omit the stories, my dear mother; I love to listen to them.

Mother. All that I have said to you, my dear, or shall say, is one connected story, though episodes, particularly affecting, are sometimes interposed, and it is no wonder you should hear them with delight. You cannot study them too much, for they are accurate pictures of the human heart, and related with exquisite skill. The most accomplished writers of fiction have taken hints from many of them for their finest compositions; but as the face of nature is always more interesting than a copy, so the real incidents of life are infinitely more affecting than the best imitations. The wisdom and goodness which dictated the scriptures for our instruction, are evinced in giving us lessons in a form so engaging, that pleasure and profit go hand in hand. That which I am about to relate of Abraham, would be incredible, if it were not stamped with the unquestionable impress of veracity.

To put the faith and obedience of this eminent patriarch, who is emphatically called "the father of the faithful," to the most rigid trial, God commanded him to take Isaac his son into the land of Moriah, and offer him on one of the mountains for a burnt offering. Isaac, his only son, whom he loved—Isaac, whose children were to be multiplied as the stars of heaven—and in whom, "all the families of the earth were to be blessed!"—How can all this come to pass if he is to be put to death before he has one child from whom a race might descend? Without being a

father ; the father of an only child—and one too from whom great and peculiar blessings were to be derived, it is impossible to appreciate the extreme hardship of this singular experiment.

Fanny. I often recollect a very affecting answer of a lady which I have somewhere read, who, in excessive grief for the loss of a child, was exhorted by her *confessor* to imitate the resignation of Abraham. “Ah! father,” cried she, “God would never have required such a sacrifice at the hand of a *mother*.”

Charles. But how could Abraham be made to believe that so cruel a sacrifice was required at his hand?

Mother. The Creator of the human mind, my son, must know how to impress it infallibly ; and we may be sure that he would leave no doubt of the source of a command so truly distressing. We may be sure the patriarch had none, because he obeyed. He obeyed too, because he knew that the *sovereign* had a right to require the life he had given. He arose early in the morning, and took Isaac his beloved child, and two of his young men, and after cutting the wood for the fire, went three days’ journey into the land of Moriah. When they came near to the appointed place, Abraham directed the servants, who might have interposed to prevent the execution of his purpose, to remain there, while he and the lad should go and worship. Then laying the wood on the shoulders of his son, and taking the fire and the knife in his own hand, they proceeded to prepare the altar. Unapprised of the severe duty imposed on his father, Isaac very naturally inquired—“Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” “My son,” said the pious Abraham, “God will provide himself a lamb.” And so indeed he did ; for at that moment when, having bound his son, and laid him on the altar—his uplifted arm with still unshaken confidence, prepared to strike the fatal blow—the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, “Lay not thine hand on the lad—for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” Looking up, the patriarch beheld a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. This he took, and offered instead of his son. This act of faith,

more honourable to Abraham than wealth and military triumphs, God was pleased to reward with renewed assurances of protection and favour. (B. C. 1871)

Charles. Such an uncommon act of submission certainly deserved a reward.

Mother. No act of man can *deserve* a reward from the Deity to whom all his services are *due*. But virtue and piety are sometimes graciously distinguished even in this life, and for our encouragement we know, they will certainly be rewarded hereafter.

A very eminent advocate for the *divine legation of Moses*, whose learning and ingenuity entitle his opinions to great respect, takes another view of this remarkable event in the life of Abraham, which, although not inconsistent with, is somewhat different from that which I have just presented to you. Action being a common mode of communication in the East, he considers this whole exhibition as designed to develop completely the promise to Abraham (hitherto opened by degrees and but partially understood,) by a lively representation* of the sacrifice of an only son, which should one day be offered on this same Mount of Moriah. Thus the seemingly harsh command became really the brilliant reward of his singular piety.

Catherine. Why then did Moses in his relation, conceal this most interesting truth, and speak of the command as the trial of Abraham's faith?

Mother. It was truly, though incidentally, a trial of his faith; while, according to this writer, it had, primarily, a more important reference; which, his people being then under a preparatory dispensation, Moses was not permitted to declare otherwise, than in his figurative institutions.

Catherine. Why is Isaac denominated the *only* son of Abraham, when Ishmael was also his son?

Mother. Because the *spiritual* promise bestowed upon Abraham was to be transmitted through Isaac to his posterity, and finally from them to all mankind. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, a wife less honourable than Sarah, who, being the first, was considered the superior.

* Bishop Warburton considers this the true interpretation of that declaration of Christ, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day."

In those days it was the practice even of good men, to have several wives. Sarah seems, at first, to have adopted Ishmael, supposing him to be the promised heir of Abraham. But when Isaac was afterwards given to her, she instigates her husband (not however without provocation from the unbecoming conduct of both mother and son,) to banish both from his house, declaring that he should not inherit with her son. This unreasonable desire was very disagreeable to the venerable patriarch, but his unerring Counsellor commanded him to listen to his wife, and comforted him with an assurance, that of Ishmael also, "he would make a great nation." Thus encouraged, he sent away the unhappy Hagar and her son, furnishing them, however, with such provisions as she could carry. When these were spent, as they wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba, despairing of any further supply, she laid her son down under some bushes, and that she might not see him die (B. C. 1892,) she sat down to weep at a distance! From this overwhelming anguish she was aroused by a voice of consolation, directing her to "take up the lad, and give him drink from a well," which she now perceived to be at hand; for "he should live and become a great nation."

Before his birth, when Hagar had fled into the same wilderness from the unkind treatment of her mistress, "The Angel of the Lord" had appeared unto her, and told her, "that her posterity should not be numbered for multitude, that her son should be a wild man, that his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him, yet he should dwell in the presence of all his brethren." And now that the prophecy might be fulfilled, the hand of providence conducted him to the desert, where he grew up and "became an archer" or a *wild man*. His children, the Arabs, are a savage race. To this day they live by violence and rapine, their hand being against every man, and all men are their enemies. Yet they preserve their independence, and are a very numerous people.

Catherine. Their country, perhaps, is not worth the expense of a conquest. We hear much of the *deserts* of Arabia.

Mother. It is indeed generally sandy and barren, but

it is interspersed with beautiful spots, and fruitful valleys. One part was anciently distinguished by the name of *Arabia the happy*. But were it utterly worthless, it would seem to be the interest of the neighbouring states to extirpate such a pestilent race of robbers; and in fact, it has often been attempted, but never accomplished. They boast of their descent from Abraham, have still some customs in common with the Jews, and justify their robberies, as travellers have told us, by the plea, that their progenitor was turned out of doors to take whatever he could get.

After these things had happened, the patriarch removed from Beer-Sheba, and again pitched his tents in the plain of Mamre, where he had formerly dwelt. Here, Sarah died, and was buried in a piece of ground which he purchased at that time for a burial place for his family.

The particulars of this incident afford a beautiful example of mutual politeness equal to any thing in our own refined days. Abraham is represented as weeping over the companion of many years, and although he stood on the ground which had been assured to his family by a better bond than any human compact could confer, he attempts not to appropriate even a sepulchre for his wife, but respectfully offers to purchase of the natives a burial place for his family. Highly venerated by them, the afflicted patriarch is solicited to make a choice, and the spot is repeatedly pressed upon him without a price. But the just and independent spirit of the sojourner, refusing to lie under an obligation to strangers, he pays the greatest sum intimated as the value of the ground, and receives a deed in due form, in the presence of all the people.

The education of Isaac had ever been the most interesting concern of Abraham. It now remained to secure him from the pernicious influence of a connexion with the idolatrous families of Canaan. To this end he called the principal servant of his house, one who had the charge of all his affairs, and directed him to go down to Mesopotamia in Syria, the native country of his master, and bring thence a wife for his son. "The Lord God of Heaven," he told this person, "would send his angel before him" to guide and prosper him.

Fanny. Why did not Abraham send Isaac to choose a wife for himself?

Mother. Princes, you know, in our own times, send ambassadors to bring their wives from foreign states: and Abraham was a prince of high standing. Besides, he had been commanded to leave forever the land of his nativity, and go into the country which his children should inherit. Accordingly, he charges his servant—"Beware that thou bring not my son thither again; but go *thou* to my country, and to my kindred, and bring thence a wife for my son Isaac."

Thus instructed, the servant took ten camels,—“for all the property of his master was in his hand”—and valuable presents in silver, and in gold, and in raiment, and departed. “As he approached the city, where Nahor, his master’s brother, resided, he came to a well, about the time in the evening when the women of the place came thither to water their flocks. Here he waited; and while he was yet praying, that his journey might be prospered, and that she to whom he should first speak, might be the appointed wife of Isaac—Rebekah, a beautiful young woman, came out to the well, with a pitcher on her shoulder. He requested a drink from her pitcher, which she readily gave him, addressing him respectfully, “Drink, my lord, and I will draw water for thy camels also.”

Charles. And did this servant allow a young woman to perform so menial an office for him?

Mother. This servant, you must recollect, was an officer of dignity; he was the steward of all Abraham’s possessions, and very probably was “that Eleazar of Damascus,” who, before the birth of Isaac, had been selected for his master’s heir. Nor was the watering of flocks considered in those days a menial employment. The customs of different ages and nations are so various, that we cannot estimate them by our own. But this practice was not confined to remote times: Dr. Clarke, who very lately travelled through the Holy Land—the same of which we are now speaking, saw the women come out from the town of Nazareth, with pitchers on their heads, to carry water, and numerous flocks of camels with their drivers reposing beside the well. In the neighbouring islands too,

he found that the porters and water-carriers were females. With us it would seem a violation of propriety, for any man to look on inactively while a young lady drew water for his beasts ; but this traveller seems to have accepted the offer of Rebekah as a common civility, whilst he stood musing, and wondering whether this meeting were an answer to his prayer. When the camels had finished drinking, he presented her with ear-rings and bracelets, inquiring whose daughter she was ; and whether there was room in her father's house to lodge him and his attendants. She replied, that she was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, and assured him that there was sufficient room for the whole of his company.

Catherine. The very house he was seeking ! how providential the seeming accident !

Mother. Abraham's servant so understood it, and instantly acknowledged the goodness of God, in directing his steps to his *master's brethren* ; thus intimating to Rebekah whence he came.

The name of Abraham, her relation, was familiar to Rebekah. Delighted to see one of his household, she ran to tell her family all that had occurred at the well ; describing particularly the grateful piety of the servant. Her brother, whose name was Laban, hastened out to conduct him to the house, accosting him by the high appellation of "Blessed of the Lord," and kindly reproved him for standing without, while all things within were ready for his accommodation. But when he had entered, and refreshments were placed before him, more careful of his master's interest than his own convenience, he declared he would not eat until he had communicated his business. He then recited briefly the history of Abraham, his eminent condition and great riches ; the birth of Isaac, the commission with which he was honoured, to make a suitable alliance for the heir of so many endowments ; his journey into Syria ; his providential meeting and conversation with Rebekah. And now, said he, "If ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me ; and if not, tell me ; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." Perceiving plainly the hand of providence, the relations of Rebekah acquiesced in the divine appointment.

Presents are universally the accompaniments of a visit in the East. They are the tributes of respect to a superior, and the expression of kindness to an equal. According to this custom Abraham's servant was provided with sumptuous gifts, of jewels, of gold, and of silver, of wearing apparel for the bride, and for her family. These were brought forth and distributed, and he and his servants, in their turn, were hospitably entertained. The next day, he requested that they would permit him to depart. The mother of Rebekah very naturally desired that their separation might be delayed for a few days, but the man entreated that he should not be detained; and Rebekah consenting to go, they were affectionately dismissed, with the blessings and prayers of her family.

Fanny. Isaac, I remember, however, went out to meet his bride.

Mother. You cannot say so much, my dear. Isaac, it is said, "went out to *meditate* in the field at eventide." Perhaps it was his daily custom, and on no occasion of his life was meditation and prayer more suitable than on the present, when he was about to receive as a companion, a stranger on whose character his future peace was suspended. It is not even said that he expected to meet her. But as he walked, he lifted up his eyes, and beheld the train. Rebekah, discovering him at a distance, inquired who he was; and being told that that was Isaac, her destined husband, she alighted from her camel, put on her veil, and prepared to meet him with modesty and respect. The tent of Sarah was prepared for the nuptials; thither Isaac conducted Rebekah, and she became his wife, (B. C. 1856,) and consoled him for the loss of his mother.

The marriage of Isaac thus happily accomplished, Abraham took to himself another consort, and had other sons besides Isaac and Ishmael. To these he gave portions, and sent them away to the countries east of Canaan; whilst Isaac remained with his father, and became the chief heir of his temporal possessions; and to him, as they had been to his father, these were abundantly multiplied. He was, too, the inheritor of his virtues, for, in his long life, which is, however, related with brevity, we hear of but one deviation from rectitude. In several circumstances of their

history, there was a striking resemblance. Driven, like his father, by famine to Gerar, the same fear of losing his wife, induced Isaac to employ an artifice similar to that into which the pious Abraham had suffered himself to be betrayed, and similar acts of justice and generosity were extended to him by the reigning monarch. Isaac indeed did not suffer the inconvenience which resulted to his father, of being separated from his wife, but he brought himself into the humiliation of being reproved by Abimelech, who nevertheless treated him with great respect, extending his protection so far as to annex even the punishment of death to any injury done to Isaac or Rebekah.

Isaac had come down to Gerar, in obedience to a divine command, accompanied by a repetition of the promise in favour of his posterity—that they should possess the land of Canaan, and transmit the spiritual blessing to all nations.

Thus honoured, and thus protected, the patriarch and his wife remained near the court of Abimelech until his possessions became immensely great. Their flocks were innumerable; the produce of their fields exceeded that of the Philistines, beyond all calculation, and the servants of their household were like the retinue of a prince. Such splendour of prosperity at length awakened the jealousy of the people, although the conduct of Isaac afforded no cause of complaint. They were obliged, therefore, to tell him plainly, that they dreaded his increasing power, and desired his removal. Nor were they satisfied by his compliance in returning to Beer-sheba, until Abimelech and some of his principal officers had paid him a visit, and persuaded him to enter into a permanent treaty of friendship; the “Well of the Oath” bearing witness to their covenant, as it had done many years before to that of their fathers.

Charles. How many years did Abraham live?

Mother. Many more than we do now; yet the life of man had been greatly abridged after the flood, and was still gradually decreasing. Abraham died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five years, (B. C. 1810) and his father, Terah, had lived two hundred and five.

Catherine. Lives so very long must have been checked with a great variety of entertaining events.

Mother. Certainly ; yet it was not the design of the Holy Spirit in giving us a revelation, to detail all the events that might entertain us, in any of the lives which it records ; but chiefly to show the universal depravity of man, and the mercy of God in providing a Saviour ; and the historical narrative is pretty generally confined to such particulars as tend to elucidate this one grand design. Hence the annals of a thousand years are contained in a very few pages. If a Messiah was to come in due time, it was necessary previously, so to point him out, that he should be acknowledged. Many of the prophecies, therefore, which predicted his advent, delineate such peculiarities of character, as apply to no other person that ever lived. He was to be of the stock of Abraham, and that this descent might admit of irrefragable proof, they were separated from all other people, and governed by a polity that was calculated to keep them pure. They were not allowed, for example, to intermarry with their idolatrous neighbours ; and therefore the servant of Abraham was sent to bring a wife for Isaac, from the house of his brethren.

To return to our narrative. In the fortieth year of his age, Isaac was married to Rebekah ; and in the sixtieth, his only children, Esau and Jacob, were born (B. C. 1837). The boys grew, and displayed very different dispositions ; and a very different destiny awaited them. Esau was active and bold ; Jacob, mild and affectionate. Esau, delighting in sports of the field, procured the venison which Isaac loved. Dressing it with his own hands according to the taste of his father, he became his favourite ; while Jacob, devoted to the gentler pleasures of domestic life, remained near his mother, and secured her almost exclusive attachment.

Having lived a century and a half, and become blind from age, Isaac thought his days were numbered. Anxious, therefore, to settle the inheritance on his eldest son, he called Esau, and directed him to take his bow, and once more procure the dish that he loved, that he might eat of it, and bless him before he died. This was overheard by Rebekah, who immediately conceived the design of imposing on her husband, and procuring the blessing for her favourite. Accordingly, she directed Jacob to run

quickly and bring a kid from the flocks, with which she would imitate the venison of Esau so completely that his father would be deceived.

Jacob's conscience disapproved of the fraud. He hesitated. "I shall bring a curse on myself," said he, "instead of a blessing." But his mother silenced his scruples: "on *me* be the curse," said she—"only obey me."

Fanny. What else could poor Jacob do when commanded by his mother?

Mother. Parents very seldom desire their children to do what is obviously wrong. If from ignorance or depravity, they so criminally disregard their own duty, they are not entitled to obedience. Perhaps Rebekah remembered, though Isaac had forgotten, the prophecy which had declared before their birth, that the blessing was entailed on the younger; she ought also to have recollected, that He who pronounced it, did not require the unjustifiable arts of his creatures to accomplish his purposes. But Jacob was probably aided by selfishness to yield to the dictate of his mother's affection. Yet we are not unwilling to plead in his behalf, that he was laudably ambitious to succeed to the spiritual inheritance bestowed on his family, and which he knew must be transmitted either through him or his brother. He was encouraged too, by Esau's apparent carelessness of the distinction; for he had before this agreed to relinquish to Jacob for a trifling recompense the privileges of an elder brother, even then desirable, though they were afterwards augmented, when the first-born were required to be particularly devoted to the services of religion. He was persuaded, however, to disguise his person, and present the dish prepared by his fond mother; nor did he hesitate to assure his father that he was "his very son Esau." "God give thee," said the patriarch, "of the dew of heaven and the fatness of earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Scarcely had this imposition been effected, when Esau came in, and presenting his venison, demanded the promised benediction. Astonished at the fraud of which

he had been made the victim, Isaac lamented that a "Deceiver had come," and to him he had given the superiority! "I have made him thy lord, said he, all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and what shall I do now for thee, my son?" "Hast thou but one blessing?" cried the afflicted Esau, "bless me, even me, also, O my father!" "Thy dwelling," replied his affectionate parent, "shall be the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above, and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother."

Catherine. As Esau had evinced his willingness to give up his birth-right, one would not think that he would have been much affected by the injury he received.

Mother. So you would naturally suppose; but we are inconsistent creatures. Though we may seem to disregard a just claim, yet we do not suffer it to be wrested from us with impunity. So it was with Esau; he was highly incensed against Jacob, and even threatened to take away his life, when he should no longer be restrained by respect for their venerable father. The anxious mother, ever watchful for the honour and safety of her favourite son, was not long ignorant of his danger. She saw that she had brought dissensions into her family, and had even armed the hand of one of her children against the other, by the indulgence of her unjust partiality, and that something must be done to avert the dreaded catastrophe. She immediately called Jacob, and telling him of the terrible menace of Esau, she besought him to flee for his life;—to go to Haran to her brother Laban, and remain under his protection till the anger of Esau should subside, and she should send a messenger to conduct him home. But how should she obtain the consent of his father, whose great age hardly allowed them to hope that he might live to see him return? A plausible pretext was found in the recent marriage of Esau, who had grieved them both, by connecting himself with the abandoned people amongst whom they lived. If Jacob should follow his example, she pathetically exclaimed, "what good shall my life do me!" Persuaded by her complaints, and remembering that he had not himself been permitted to marry a Canaanitish woman, Isaac summoned his younger son, and charged

him not to take a wife of the people of Canaan; but to go into Syria to the house of Laban, his mother's brother, and ask his daughter in marriage.

This point gained, no time is lost in preparation. Anxious now only for the safety of the youth, for whose advancement she had hazarded so much, and even sullied her own fair reputation, Rebekah provides no sumptuous retinue, like that which attended her own espousals. Not even one servant of his father's numerous household protects the favoured heir—but dejected and alone, he takes the road to Padan Aram! (B. C. 1760.)

Catherine. This did not look like lording it over his brethren. Jacob is obliged to flee from the presence of Esau, and leave him in possession of affluence, who was to be “his servant,” according to the prediction of his father!

Mother. You may remember, in the case of Ham, that prophecies belonged rather to a race of people than to the progenitor to whom they may have been spoken. You will see as we advance, that the family of Jacob became indeed illustrious, and all the promises were verified in them. Individuals follow their own imaginations, but all conspire to accomplish the designs of Him who cannot be disappointed! The hope of Jacob might indeed languish under such discouraging circumstances, immediately succeeding to his triumph, but he was soon revived by happier prospects; for when he rested the same night, the unceasing providence of God was represented to him in a vision, by a great ladder, whose foot rested on the ground where he slept, and whose top reached the heavens. Angels continually passed up and down, on errands of mercy to an unworthy world, whilst the voice of “the God of Abraham and of Isaac,” assured him of protection, whithersoever he went; and confirmed to him, in their fullest extent, the promises that had been graciously given to them!

Awed by a vision so extraordinary, he beheld the place with reverence! “Surely,” said he, “this is the house of God, and I knew it not!” Then rising early in the morning he took some of the stones that had pillowed his head,” erected a pillar, and consecrated it and himself to

his Almighty Patron. "If God, said he, "will be with me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

Charles. How did Jacob consecrate the pillar?

Mother. The text says "he poured oil upon the top of it." Anointing the head with oil was an ancient mode of consecration or investiture to office.

Confiding now in his efficient shield, he cheerfully pursued his journey eastward, till he came to a well near Haran. Springs of water are rare in that country, and wells, only at considerable distances; so that wherever they are found, they are the resting places of the traveller, and the centre of communication for the inhabitants; for there, they all assemble at certain hours to water their cattle. That time had not yet arrived; the stone that covered the well, yet lay on its mouth; but the shepherds were collecting, and Jacob embraced so favourable an opportunity of inquiring for Laban, the son of Nahor. The answer he received, was not less grateful than the water which now refreshed his wearied frame! They knew him, he was well, and the maiden who approached with her sheep to the cistern, was Rachel, his daughter!

Catherine. Now here is a circumstance so apparently trivial as to offer us nothing, yet its coincidence with a custom of the present day is strikingly remarkable. "The stone lay on the well's mouth" is incidentally said, and modern travellers report that in Arabia they cover the wells lest the loose sand which is put in motion by the wind should quite stop them up. They wait till the flocks are all gathered together before they begin to draw water, and when they have finished, the well is immediately closed again.

Mother. Our conversations would be protracted beyond our plan, were we to exhibit every fact illustrative of the authenticity of Scripture history, yet we are sometimes arrested so forcibly, that we cannot easily pass on. Let us now return to our traveller whom we left watch-

* This vow of Jacob is to be considered as a grateful acknowledgment of his *obligation* to serve the Lord—not a *conditional* promise.

ing with a palpitating heart the approach of his fair cousin.

Laban, the brother of Rebekah, had two daughters. Leah, the elder, was not handsome; but Rachel, the younger, was beautiful! Overpowered by her unexpected appearance—his spirits exhausted by a long journey, of nearly five hundred miles, and recollecting his forlorn situation, an exile from his father's house, Jacob could not restrain his tears, while he told her he was her relative—the son of her father's sister! Then, courteously removing the stone, he drew water for her flock, while she ran to carry the news of his arrival to her father. Laban himself came out to receive him, and the fugitive was conducted to the house with the tenderest expressions of joy and affection!

Consoled now by the caresses of his new friends, Jacob found himself at home in his uncle's family. He took an interest in their affairs, and a share in their labours. Days and weeks rolled pleasantly away, but he said nothing of the purpose of his visit, until Laban, observing his capacity for business, proposed to give him a salary for his services, because, 'it was unreasonable,' he said, 'that they should be received without a compensation.' He bid him, therefore, to fix his own terms, and Jacob required no time to deliberate. The charms of Rachel had captivated his affections, the voice of avarice was silent, and love alone preferred her claim: for Rachel—the beautiful shepherdess, was all he desired! Seven years would he serve, were she the reward! Unwilling to part with his nephew, or to alienate his family from that of Isaac, Laban accepted the offer.

Time now moved on silken wings—years were but days in the estimation of Jacob; he kept the herds of his kinsman, and felt neither the noonday sun, nor the midnight dew; for in the society of Rachel, every toil was delightful! Seven years were completed, and he claimed his reward. Laban prepared for the wedding. The neighbours were invited, and the banquet was spread. But a cruel disappointment awaited the lover; for the deceitful Laban, favoured by the eastern custom of covering the bride with a long veil, united him to Leah, instead of Rachel!

Charles. Then the imposition that Jacob had practised on his father, was now returned on his own head.

Mother. Yes. But we do not choose that others should do unto us as we do unto them; and Jacob accordingly, grieved and indignant, complained of the cheat. He had served for Rachel; why then was Leah, the disagreeable Leah, imposed upon him? They who commit injustice are seldom without an excuse, and the crafty Syrian had one at hand. It was not their custom, he said, to give away the younger daughter before the elder; but seeing that poor Jacob had given his heart wholly to Rachel, another seven years' servitude might obtain her also. No price was too great to obtain the object of his affection; and another period of bondage was readily undertaken by the devoted lover.

It is not, however, understood by commentators that the reward of his constancy was withheld until the stipulated service was rendered. The circumstances of their subsequent history require that Rachel should have been given to Jacob immediately upon his agreeing to serve another seven years, and acknowledging Leah publicly, by "fulfilling her week," which is supposed to mean the celebration of the marriage festivities, for a week.

Fanny. Was it lawful for Jacob to marry two sisters?

Mother. It was never lawful for any man to have more than one wife at a time. The will of the Creator is unequivocally declared in the formation of one man and one woman at the first. Reason easily deduces the same, and the testimony of the Messiah is to us conclusive. But the patriarchs were not so clear in the knowledge of their duty as we are; besides, they were unhappily surrounded by Heathens, into whose vicious practices they were sometimes betrayed. Their deviations are faithfully recorded, to show us that the best of men were imperfect. Jacob was certainly a pious man, yet he committed several actions that cannot be justified. He not only married both sisters, but while they yet lived, he took two other wives.

Jacob seems to have remained contentedly with Laban many years after his marriage; for we have no intimation of a desire to return to his country, till he was the father of eleven sons and one daughter. He then began to think

of settling his family in the land which was ultimately to be their inheritance. But when he communicated his intention to his father-in-law, the latter would not consent to his desire. Experience, he said, had taught him, that the blessing of heaven attended the labours of Jacob. The cattle had increased to a multitude under his careful hand ; and now if he would yet remain in his service, whatsoever he required should be his. Persuaded by this tempting offer, Jacob proposed to receive for his wages a certain share of the flocks committed to his charge. The terms were accepted, and he removed with his family several days' journey from the dwelling of his father-in-law, and attended his charge with assiduity. As wealth accumulated around him, the jealousy of Laban's sons was proportionably excited. They saw a stranger growing rich on their patrimony, and forgetting the long and faithful service by which he purchased his right, they instigated their father to treat him with coldness.

About the same time, in a dream, he was commanded to return to his native country ; a step which he knew would be opposed by Laban, who had manifested so repeatedly his anxious desire to convert to his own advantage the temporal blessings so abundantly bestowed upon Jacob. To compel his continuance in Mesopotamia, violent measures might perhaps be adopted—even the seizure of his wives and their children, should his intention to depart be communicated to his father-in-law. A secret removal would prevent inconvenient collisions—and to obtain the acquiescence of Leah and Rachel, when he informed them of the mandate he had received, he expatiated on the services he had rendered to their family, and the ingratitude and treachery he had experienced. The sisters had been made sadly sensible of the avaricious disposition of their father ; they now saw the alienation of his affections, and declared their readiness to submit to the divine command.

Catherine. Their simple mode of life was favourable to the execution of their plan ; they were not encumbered with the multifarious articles of household furniture indispensable with us.

Mother. A very few utensils, and those of primary necessity, supplied the wants of Jacob's family. Their

wealth consisting chiefly in cattle and servants, was easily put in motion; so that the Euphrates was passed; and three days' journey performed, without interruption. But the march of so large a cavalcade could not be concealed; Laban heard of it, and immediately pursuing, he overtook them encamped on Mount Gilead, and warmly expostulated with Jacob for having carried off his daughters, and his grandchildren, without allowing him to dismiss them with paternal embraces, and with feasting and music, agreeably to their customs. It was still in his power, he said, to injure him, but he would abstain, because he had been warned by God, not to touch his servant.

Although Laban had affected to mingle kindness with his censures, this last acknowledgment was to Jacob a conviction, that he did not owe his safety to the voluntary forbearance of his father-in-law: he therefore recited the labours and sufferings he had endured, the unjust treatment he had received, and declared plainly that he had departed in silence, because he had apprehended the loss of his family, had he permitted them to take leave. The acrimony of their mutual upbraidings, however, at length gave way to tender recollections; and, after they had agreed to separate in peace, they built a pillar of stones on the Mount, as a memorial of their friendship.

Charles. I am impatient to know how his brother Esau received him. I hope he had forgiven him during his long absence.

Mother. Jacob had now been twenty years in exile, and seems to have held no correspondence with his father's house: for he was ignorant of any change in his brother's disposition towards him, and still dreaded his presence. To appease him, therefore, and to signify his own penitence and submission, he sent messengers before him to Mount Seir, the dwelling of Esau, to apprise him respectfully of his approach; and was greatly distressed when returning they told him that his brother was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Uncertain of his fate, yet fearing the worst, even the sacrifice of his wives and his children, he prepared to defend them: he divided his company into two bands; that if one should perish, the other might es-

cape. Then, solemnly calling upon the God of his fathers to deliver him from his enemies, he acknowledged his guilt and unworthiness of all the mercies he had received—he, who had gone out with “his staff in his hand,” and was now returning with abundant possessions!

The next morning he took from his flocks a munificent present for Esau, and sent it before him commanding his servants to deliver his gift in the lowliest language, and to say, “*thy servant* Jacob is behind us.” The night following, his Almighty Benefactor again appeared to him—again renewed his promise of protection—and gave him a new name, that of *Israel**—a word which imports peculiar honour. Still suffering in his reproofing conscience the just punishment of his former duplicity, when he came in sight of Esau, he arranged his family in order, to meet the hostile company, as he supposed; placing his beloved Rachel and her son Joseph, behind the rest—and then advanced bowing himself seven times to the ground. But how great was his joy and surprise to find himself in the arms of a reconciled brother, shedding tears of love and pardon on his neck! His Leah and his Rachel were now introduced—the little ones were presented—and the gift which Esau had considerably declined, because he already possessed more than enough, was again pressed, and finally accepted. The now happy Jacob, in his turn, declined the offer of his brother’s attendance on his journey. His servants were then offered to assist the more delicate of the train, and wait upon the children. But the friendship of his brother was all that Jacob required, and he civilly refused to put him to any further trouble. So they parted in perfect amity. Esau returned to his dwelling at Mount Seir, and Jacob at length arrived in safety in the land of his nativity.

Fanny. It is a little strange that Jacob was so willing to dispense with his brother’s company on his journey, considering his own anxiety and Esau’s kindness.

Mother. In this interview, although the behaviour of Esau was kind, his brother was perhaps not satisfied of its sincerity, and did not therefore feel very easy in the

Israel, one who prevails with God.

presence of his four hundred attendants. Under this impression, he might naturally wish for an immediate separation.

At a place called Shalem, a city of Sichem, Jacob first erected his tents. Some time afterwards he was commanded to remove to Bethel, (the sacred spot where God had appeared to him when he fled from Esau,) to build an altar and to dwell there. At Ephrath, (afterwards Bethlehem,) on this sorrowful journey, he buried Rachel, (after she had given birth to Benjamin, her second son,) and gratified his steady affection by erecting a monument to her memory.

Before he left Shalem, he called on his wives and his servants to deliver up all the household gods, they had brought with them from Mesopotamia, and there he buried them, resolving to perform the vow he had made, that the "Lord should be his god."

Charles. What do you mean by household gods?

Mother. A sort of tutelary idol retained by the heathens in their houses, under the vain imagination, that they derived protection and prosperity from their presence.

Fanny. You tell us, mother, no more of the venerable Isaac or Rebekah. Did they not live to receive the fugitive?

Mother. Isaac saw him return; his death is recorded soon after, (B. C. 1716) at the age of an hundred and fourscore years. Of Rebekah we hear no more, although the death and burial of Deborah her nurse, one of the females who attended her from her father's house, is mentioned about this time.

Whilst all these things were transacting, the interests of Esau had not been neglected. Promises of temporal blessings had been given to him, and they were liberally verified. Finding his gentile connexions displeasing to his parents, he married a daughter of Ishmael, his kinsman. By these several wives, he had a numerous posterity. They became wealthy and powerful. Mount Seir, on the east and west of the Dead Sea, was at first their habitation. Thence, they extended by degrees through the western parts of Arabia Petrea, quite to the Mediterranean; and there we find them many ages succeeding, under the name of Edomites, or Idumeans.

The Red Sea, or Arabian gulf, is said to take its name from Edom, or Esau, which signifies *red*—because his descendants inhabited its borders.

We come now to the beautiful story of Joseph, which is familiar to every one. We cannot however omit it, because it is intimately connected with the history of Israel.

Catherine. No matter how often it is repeated, mother. I have never read any thing so deeply interesting.

Mother. It is impossible to surpass the divine relation of the historian, nor could it be abridged without an injury to his unaffected simplicity, unless the mantle of Moses should again conceal the human hand ! I touch it, therefore, with unaffected diffidence, and must be content to relinquish the embellishment of many inimitable strokes of noble eloquence, and continue briefly our narrative through the principal events of that patriarch's life. He was the favourite child of his father, and, most probably, because he was the most amiable. For it would seem more likely that Benjamin, the Benoni,* bequeathed with the last breath of his beloved Rachel, should engage the partial fondness of the bereaved husband. But he loved Joseph more than all his other children, and excited their jealousy by imprudently displaying his affection.

Accustomed as they were to consider the elder, as entitled to superior honours, they could not behold Joseph distinguished by a garment of curious texture, the mark of his father's peculiar favour, without envy and dislike. But Joseph was destined to be more nobly distinguished by wisdom and virtue, to fill a station of eminence, and distribute relief to a suffering community.

Intimations of his extraordinary fortune were given to him in two dreams, which in the innocence of his heart, he related to his family. "We were binding sheaves together in the field," said he, at one time, "and my sheaf arose and stood up, and your sheaves stood round about ; and made obeisance to mine." And at another, "I thought the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars, made obeisance to me."

* Benoni, "the son of my sorrow ;" the name given by his mother at the moment of her death.

Catherine. This designation of their number was too plain to be misunderstood, particularly by those who, envying him, might be watching for occasions of complaint.

Mother. Even his fond father felt the implication, and rebuked his seeming arrogance. "Shall I," said he, "and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed, come to bow down ourselves to thee?" But the prediction sunk deep in his mind.

Jacob, who had been himself preferred to an elder brother, might very naturally have anticipated something more than the casual play of imagination in the dreams of his younger son; and brothers who might each have been flattering themselves with the promised blessing, now seemed to behold the object of their previous ill-will invested with their rightful honours. Like Esau, then, they determined to remove him from the possibility of supplanting them, and before he had passed his seventeenth year, an opportunity occurred to execute their atrocious plan.

They were shepherds, and tended their flocks, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, occasionally changing for the benefit of pasturage. They were now supposed to be at Shechem, considerably distant from the vale of Hebron, the dwelling of the family, and had probably been a good while absent, as their father became anxious to hear from them. Unsuspicious of any danger to Joseph, whom he had kept at home, he sent him to visit his brothers, and bring him intelligence of their welfare. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, he was informed by a stranger, of whom he inquired, that they had removed to Dothan. Thither, therefore, he followed them; and when they saw him approaching, and thought of his superior endowments, and aspiring dreams, they saw the moment they had waited for, and proposed to put him to death, and deceive his father by some plausible tale.

Reuben, the eldest son of Leah, was not of the council, but he overheard the shocking plan. Moved by compassion for his aged parent, he contrived to save the life of the helpless youth, by persuading his brothers rather to confine, and leave him to perish in the field, than stain their hands with his blood. To get him out of their way at any rate, being their object, they adopted Reuben's plan,

and cast him into a deep pit, after having stript him of his coat of many colours.

This barbarous act concluded, they sat down to refresh themselves, regardless of their unhappy brother, whom they had just left to starve.

Whilst they were yet eating and drinking, a caravan of Ishmaelitish merchants, carrying balm and spices to Egypt, appeared in sight. They dealt also in slaves, and now the avarice of these unnatural men, most happily suggested the sale of Joseph, rather than the unprofitable guilt of putting him to death. Accordingly, they disposed of him to the traders, for twenty pieces of silver. Reuben, his advocate, had been absent during this last transaction. Returning to the pit, to conduct him in safety to his father, and finding him not, he ran in great consternation to his brothers, lamenting the sad accident. Instead of openly defending him against their violence, he had weakly condescended to preserve him by a stratagem, and now that he was lost, how should he return to his father! What could he now do? He could only unite with the more guilty, in devising a plan to conceal the whole. They killed a kid, and staining the coat of Joseph, they carried it with affected simplicity to their father, and asked if he could certainly identify it!

The fond father knew at once the coat of his darling child, his own distinctive gift, and the conclusion was inevitable: "an evil beast hath destroyed my son, I will go mourning to my grave!" Absorbed in grief, he wrapped himself in the mourning garb of sackcloth, nor could the efforts of his children or his friends, alleviate his sorrow.

Catherine. How must envy have hardened their hearts, when they could be insensible to the tears of their aged sire!

Mother. Let this affecting example, my children, be a beacon to warn you against the least approach of such a baneful passion. These deluded men were gratified with the present success of their barbarous scheme; but they reflected not on the anguish they were preparing for themselves. (B. C. 1729).

Meanwhile, their unoffending brother was carried by the traders into Egypt. His engaging countenance would

readily procure a purchaser, and he became the property of Potiphar, an officer in the king's guard. Potiphar was a discerning man : under every disadvantage he discovered the extraordinary talents of Joseph, and though but a youth, a stranger, and a slave, to his management he committed all his affairs. Ten years he continued in this subordinate situation, conducting himself with unvarying prudence, and enjoying the utmost confidence of his master. All the house of Potiphar was blessed for the sake of his Hebrew servant—the verification of whose auspicious vision seemed already to dawn,—when a cloud intervened, and obscured for a time his ascending glory. Though Potiphar saw no fault in Joseph, he suffered his esteem to be suddenly subverted by the misrepresentations of an abandoned wife, and degrading him from all his employments, he cast him into the prison of the guard house ! Here, too, Joseph obtained the reverence that his virtues deserved. The keeper was probably acquainted with the true character of the slandered Hebrew, and had seen the smile of Providence illumining his captivity. Assured, therefore, of his fidelity, he gave him the charge of his fellow prisoners.

Among others, two officers of Pharaoh, his chief baker, and chief butler, who had offended their master, were consigned to his care. These men were observed by Joseph one morning, when he visited them, to appear remarkably dejected. He inquired the reason, and was told that they had respectively been disturbed by foreboding dreams, and there was “no one in the prison to interpret them.” He requested them to tell *him* their dreams, and piously intimated that God, who alone had the power, would impart the design ! The dreams were related, and the unhappy baker was informed, that “in three days the king would hang him on a tree,” but to the more fortunate butler, he predicted his restoration to his office ; and he made use of the opportunity to bring his own cause before the king ; beseeching his fellow prisoner to remember *him* when he should again deliver the cup to Pharaoh. “For indeed,” said he, “I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here have I done nothing to deserve a dungeon.”

Elated by such reviving hopes as the young prophet had infused, the measured days passed not on so rapidly

with the expectant of royal favours, as they did in the sad reckoning of the sentenced criminal, who dreaded the arrival of the appointed hour! It came, however. It was the birth-day of Pharaoh, and the last of the poor baker's existence; for on that day he was hanged, while, in strict consonance also with the prediction, the cup-bearer was reinstated; but the enlightened messenger, the virtuous, yet reviled servant of Potiphar, was forgotten!

Charles. Oh barbarous! could the butler be so very ungrateful?

Mother. He was unkind, and even unjust, rather than ungrateful. The prophet was in no wise the author, or even the instrument, of his deliverance. He had indeed relieved him from oppressive apprehensions; for in a despotic government like that of Egypt, where the will of the monarch was the only rule, no man can estimate the measure of his punishment, however light his offence. But he had seen the wisdom and virtue of Joseph in the prison, and knowing that he was the victim of injustice, it was his duty to advocate his cause, when he was himself restored to favour.

Two years afterwards the monarch himself was thrown into great consternation by a singular dream, and his magicians and soothsayers were summoned in vain to declare the mystery. No plausible conjecture occurred to their minds, all was doubt and anxiety, and now the careless butler remembered Joseph, and reproached himself. He hastened to his master, and informed him that he might find in the royal prison a young Hebrew, a servant to the captain, who could interpret dreams, and confessing his own guilty negligence, he related the occurrences that had displayed the inspiration of Joseph. These were joyful tidings to the humbled king, and Joseph was brought out as quickly as he could change his garments, and fit himself to appear in the royal presence. "I have dreamed a dream," said Pharaoh, "and I have heard that thou canst interpret it." With the same humility with which he had answered his fellow prisoners on a similar occasion, assuming nothing to himself, Joseph replied, "*God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

"In my dream," resumed the king, "I saw seven fat

cattle come up out of the river, and feed in a meadow, and seven others, so poor, so ill-favoured, as I never saw in all the land of Egypt, came after them, and devoured the fat cattle. And again; I saw seven ears of corn come up on one stalk, full and good; and other seven, withered, thin, and blasted by the east wind, sprung up after them, and devoured the seven good ears—and the magicians are not able to declare the meaning.”

Fanny. If dreams were once so full of meaning, why do we wholly disregard them now?

Mother. Because we have now an ample revelation containing all that it is necessary for us to know of the future, and all that we require to direct us for the present. Before that was written, various means were used to instruct mankind. Amongst these were dreams; which, though superstitiously observed by the orientalists, who were much addicted to emblems and signs, were often made subservient to the decrees of Providence. Pharaoh, on this occasion, was happily submissive to the divine suggestion; and listened attentively whilst Joseph expounded the mysterious vision.

“God,” said he, “hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great plenty shall bless the whole land of Egypt; and afterwards seven years of famine shall so consume it, that the abundance shall be forgotten. And because these things shall surely come to pass, let the king avail himself of this gracious communication, and appoint a suitable person to lay up corn in the plentiful years, to keep the people alive during the famine that shall follow.”

“Can we find,” exclaimed the delighted king, “such an one as this, in whom is the spirit of God? He to whom such high knowledge is imparted, is the most wise, and most proper to be set over the kingdom.” Then taking a ring from his own hand, and putting it on that of Joseph (B. C. 1715)—“Thou,” continued he, “art ruler of all my people—only in the throne will I be greater than thou.” Then turning to his servants, he commanded them to array Joseph in sumptuous apparel, to seat him in the second chariot in the kingdom—and proclaim before him, “Bow the knee!” Still further to promote his honour and happi-

ness, he gave him in marriage an Egyptian lady—Ase-nath, the daughter of Potipherah, a priest of On.

Fanny. Then these people worshipped idols, though they acknowledged the God of Joseph!

Mother. Believing in a plurality, they thought them not incompatible. Here, you see, they admitted the power and knowledge of one Supreme—yet we know that they were addicted to the basest idolatries.

Elevated now to the second dignity in the empire, and invested with powers to execute his benevolent purposes, Joseph went throughout the provinces of the empire, preparing storehouses, to lay up the surplus food of the plentiful years. They came, according to his foresight, and the earth produced her fruits in immeasurable abundance, and in every city the corn of its district was carefully stored.

The seven years' famine also arrived, and the perishing multitudes cried to Pharaoh for bread. To Joseph every thing was committed, and he opened his stores and supplied them according to his discretion, and the treasury of Pharaoh was filled with gold.

But the famine was not confined to Egypt; the adjacent countries were equally afflicted, and when they heard that the Egyptians had provided against the general scarcity, they crowded thither for food.

(B. C. 1717.) Amongst those that presented themselves on this momentous occasion, came ten of the sons of Jacob, and prostrated themselves to the ground before the governor of Egypt—little imagining that he whom they now revered was their banished brother!

Catherine. How could they possibly have forgotten him? One would think that remorse alone would have kept him alive in their memories.

Mother. They had not forgotten him—their cruelty to him had penetrated their minds, as we shall presently see: but now they were occupied with more immediate cares.—Besides, his person was altered with the progress of his years. To the bloom of his beauty was added the maturity of manhood; nor had they thought of looking for him amidst the splendour of a court, and invested with the power of a sovereign. But he recollected them, and now

saw the accomplishment of his prophetic dreams. Thrown thus into his power, and petitioning for bread for themselves and their families, his gentle nature forbade retribution. He thought of his aged father—he thought of Benjamin, his younger brother—and, to conceal the yearnings of his heart, he charged them abruptly with coming to see the poverty of the country! They disclaimed the ignoble purpose! “They were,” they said, “*twelve* brethren, the sons of one man—that the youngest remained at home with his father, and *another was not* ;* and to buy corn for their families alone were they come.” He affected to question their integrity, and, threatening to punish them as spies, he threw them into prison. Coming to them after a few days, he proposed that they should prove the truth of their statement by bringing their youngest brother into Egypt; but he would keep one of their number, in the prison, an hostage for their return.

Overpowered by these painful circumstances, appealing to their awakened consciences, they broke out into lamentations, and bitterly reproached themselves, even in the presence of Joseph, whom they did not imagine understood them, for he had hitherto employed an interpreter. “Verily, we are guilty concerning our brother; for we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us!”

“Did I not say to you,” cried Reuben, “Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? therefore, now, his blood is required!”

These mutual upbraidings shook the fortitude of Joseph; his heart relented, and he turned from them to conceal his tears.

But still forcing his gentle nature to keep up the suspicion he had assumed, he continued to treat them as spies. “Prove yourselves true men,” said he, as soon as he could command his voice to speak, “by bringing your youngest brother to me”—then singling out Simeon, and binding him before their eyes, he dismissed the remaining nine,

* This form of expression was probably used to avoid the direct assertion of Joseph's death, which they could not certainly affirm.

directing his servants to provide them amply with every thing necessary for their journey.

Leaving Simeon, therefore, to reflect on the retributive justice of providence which had thus imprisoned him in the very country to which he had sent his pleading captive brother—they were obliged to return home. Greatly distressed, however, by the apparent cruelty of the governor, and dreading to meet their abused parent, they were still more perplexed, when, on the evening of the first day's journey, one of them, on opening his sack to get provender for their asses discovered the same bundle of money which he had given to the steward of Egypt for corn! Fearful that divine vengeance had now indeed overtaken them, they said one to another, "What is this that God has done to us?" But how aggravated were their terrors, when, arriving at home, and in the presence of their father, they emptied their sacks, each man found his parcel of money secretly returned! Compelled to account for the absence of Simeon, they were obliged to relate all that had befallen them; and to add the cruel injunction of the viceroy, that Benjamin should come to verify their story and deliver Simeon. "Me," cried the afflicted parent, "ye have bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." "Slay my two sons," replied Reuben, confident of the probity of the Egyptian prince, notwithstanding the problematical detention of Simeon, "if I bring him not to thee; deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." But entreaty was vain—Benjamin, the only remaining child of his lamented Rachel, he would not hazard on so long a journey. "My son," said he, "shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Catherine. Poor old man! I never read his pathetic lamentation without tears. Still, I cannot help blaming him for refusing to send Benjamin to release Simeon, who ought to have been equally dear to him.

Mother. I am no apologist for parents who make unreasonable discriminations amongst their children; indeed

they are seldom observed, where all the children of a family are equally dutiful. In this case we may allow something to the enfeebling effects of old age and peculiar circumstances. Necessity, however, soon wrung from Israel a reluctant consent. Their provision was exhausted, and he was obliged to call upon his sons :—" Go again, buy us a little food." Judah, less tender than Reuben, declared they *would not* go without Benjamin ; " for the governor," said he, " did solemnly protest that we should not see his face without our youngest brother." Pressed now on every side, the suffering father exclaimed, " Why dealt ye so ill with me as to tell the man ye had yet a brother ?" They answered, that he had questioned them so closely, that they could not conceal it ; nor had they any motive for endeavouring to do so, for they could not imagine that he would say, " bring your brother down." And they continued to urge him by every consideration of tenderness for them and their little ones, of duty to himself, and the impolicy of a longer delay, to commit Benjamin to their care,—pledging themselves with affectionate solemnity for his safety. " Go then," cried the distracted patriarch, " if it must be so, take of the best fruits in the land a present to the man, and double money in your hand, and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hands ; peradventure it was an over-sight. Take also your brother, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." With these affecting words he dismissed them, and they hastened into Egypt, and to the presence of Joseph, who, when he saw that Benjamin was with them, directed his steward to prepare an entertainment, and bring these interesting strangers to his house at noon, avoiding himself for the present any conversation with them. Alarmed by this unexpected honour, and connecting it with the mysterious circumstance of the money returned in their sacks, they sought the steward, and anxiously exculpated themselves from any knowledge of that obnoxious act ; in confirmation of which, they had brought the money again with them, and had added other sums to obtain a further supply of

corn, the single object, they again asserted, of their first visit. The good-natured steward relieved their excessive apprehensions by acknowledging, that he had himself restored their money, and encouraged them to hope that Providence had yet some especial favours in store for them. He then liberated their brother Simeon, and brought them all into Joseph's house where they were to dine,—gave them water to wash their feet, and other refreshments, very grateful after their long journey.

Charles. Let me take this opportunity to ask the reason of that ancient custom of giving travellers water to wash their feet; we should think it an awkward piece of civility now.

Mother. We do not require it. Our convenient boots and shoes were not known to the people who practised that courtesy. They wore sandals, which exposed the upper part of the foot to the dust. Washing the feet and bathing the whole body are so necessary to health as well as comfort, that it becomes a religious rite in very hot climates. But I will not detain you from the meeting of Joseph with his brethren.

Fanny. Yes, I am impatient to return to that eventful dinner.

Mother. No explanation took place at this second meeting, for the purposes of Providence were not yet completed. Every thing that occurred was calculated to excite wonder and reflection; especially the singular notice that was taken of Benjamin: for Joseph not only graciously accepted their present, and asked affectionately for their father, "the old man of whom they had spoken;" but seeing a new face among them, he gently inquired, "Is this your younger brother? God be gracious to thee, my son," was all he could articulate; and hurrying from them to his chamber, he gave vent to his tears. When his agitated feelings were in some measure tranquillized, he washed his face, and assuming an air of indifference, met his family and guests.

Three tables were prepared; one for the governor of Egypt, another for his eleven brothers, and a third for the nobles who were admitted to his society, and who could not submit to the abomination of eating with the Hebrews.

Charles. Dear mother, your narrative so often encounters the customs or prejudices of the ancients, of whom I am always anxious to learn what I can, that I am tempted to interrupt you. Pray tell me why these people could not eat together

Mother. Because the Hebrews, who at that time made no distinction in articles of food, would eat the flesh of animals held sacred by the Egyptians; and the abhorrence of the latter for such a profanation would not permit them to sit at table with those who committed it.

But though offensive in this particular, the strangers were treated with extraordinary civility. Arranged carefully in the order of their birth, they received each a portion from the governor's table; but Benjamin's was five times the quantity of any of his brothers. This singular attention amazed them; but as they saw no immediate occasion of alarm, they enjoyed the present moment in feasting and mirth. Early the next morning they commenced their journey homeward laden with provisions as much as they could possibly carry. But scarcely had they lost sight of the city, when they were overtaken by the very steward who had seemed so studious of their comfort, and abruptly reproached with having returned evil for good, in that they had stolen the golden cup of his master! Confident in their innocence, and seeing only in this disgraceful charge some new oppression of their mysterious persecutor, they fearlessly inquired, how they, who had brought back the money discovered in their sacks on a former occasion, which they might have concealed and retained, could now be suspected of an action they abhorred? And to evince their indignant sincerity, they added, "let him die with whom the cup shall be found." The terms were accepted, and the baggage immediately examined; beginning with Reuben's and descending to Benjamin, when lo! in the sack of the latter, the goblet was found.

Fanny. Alas! Had he stolen it indeed?

Mother. O no—it was placed there secretly by Joseph's direction, who intended by these trials to bring them to a sense of their guilt. Their conviction had seemed yet incomplete; but now overpowered entirely by the dreadful

result of their own stipulation, they saw the hand of God taking vengeance for their brother's blood. In awful suspense they returned to the presence of Joseph, and prostrating themselves at his feet, they exclaimed, "what shall we speak, or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold we are my lord's servants, both we, and he with whom the cup is found."

"God forbid," returned he, "that I should do so: the man in whose hand the cup is found, *he* shall be my servant, as for you; get you up to your father in peace.

This determination was the climax of their sufferings. To see the sorrow they had once wantonly brought upon their father by tearing from him his favourite, renewed in the loss of Benjamin, they could not endure. Judah, therefore, encouraged by the amiable deportment of Joseph, approached him, and deprecating his anger, he prayed to be heard. He then went on to rehearse with the simple eloquence of heartfelt grief, the whole history of their coming into Egypt. He painted the anguish of his father for the loss of Joseph, his best beloved child, his subsequent tenderness for Benjamin, the only remaining son of their mother, and his excessive unwillingness to trust him out of his sight. Nor did he forget indirectly to appeal to the generosity of the governor, by reminding him that the unhappy Israel would not have been brought into this dilemma but for his own rigid inquiry,—“have ye yet a brother?” and his refusal to let them have corn except their younger brother came down. “Suspecting no danger,” he continued, “he had readily become the surety for his safety; and now that the liberty of Benjamin was thus inexplicably forfeited, he would pay the penalty in his stead, for he could not return and behold the anguish of his father.”

This pathetic speech of Judah, not one word of which can be omitted without losing a significant expression, was admirably adapted to affect such a man as Joseph; his firmness was conquered—the tide of tender emotions could no longer be restrained—and hastily commanding every one except the culprits to leave the room, he exclaimed, “I am Joseph—does my father yet live!” Amaze-

ment, joy, and shame, overpowered his brethren. Silence, the most profound, could alone declare the tumultuous passions which mingled in their bosoms. He saw them unable to speak, and generously encouraged and comforted them—"Come near, I pray you," said he, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; be not grieved, therefore, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life." Seeing them incredulous, and pitying their confusion, he continued to assure them, "haste ye, go to my father and say to him, thus saith thy son Joseph—God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not, and I will nourish thee, for there are yet five years of famine; thou shalt dwell in Goshen, with all that thou hast, lest thou come to poverty. Your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you; tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and all that ye have seen, and haste and bring down my father hither." The generous effort to relieve his troubled brothers was now exhausted. Language refused any longer her aid; but throwing his arms around his beloved Benjamin, and by turns embracing them all, tears, the natural eloquence of unutterable tenderness, expressed the rest!

Tranquillity and confidence by degrees succeeded these impassioned feelings, and they conversed affectionately together. In the mean while, the report of this unexpected meeting had gone abroad. The violence of Joseph's agitation had been observed by his servants; every one rejoiced in the happiness of their benefactor; and Pharaoh himself, embracing every opportunity to testify his high regard for him, gave immediate command that carriages should be prepared to bring down the father of Joseph and his whole family into Egypt. "Regard not your stuff," said the liberal prince, "for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours."

Preparations were accordingly made, and the sons of Israel, laden with provisions and presents both for him and themselves, returned to their father with the tidings of Joseph's existence and elevation in Egypt.

Fanny. These tidings would seem almost as insupport-

able to Jacob as the former had been, though from an opposite cause.

Mother. His feeble spirits fainted under the excess of surprise and joy, and only the evidence of the carriages provided by Joseph and the munificent monarch whom he served, to transport him with all that he had, could convince him that such great and unexpected blessings were his. "It is enough, (said he); Joseph my son is yet alive—I will go and see him before I die."

Fanny. I suppose Israel intended to return to the land of promise, and die there.

Mother. He might reasonably have cherished such a hope, because he had not yet attained, as he afterwards told Pharaoh, to the years of the life of his fathers: but he certainly knew that his posterity should return. Yet knowing also that they should be afflicted "in a land wherein they were strangers," this sudden removal of his whole family to a foreign country, was calculated to fill his mind with anxious reflections on the probable consequences of an event so remarkable.

Arriving at Beer-sheba, on his journey into Egypt, Israel was forcibly impressed with the kindness of Providence to his family. Here was "the Well of the Oath," the memorable spot where Abraham and Isaac had received the homage of the king of Gerar. Here, then, he stopped to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Him who had so marvellously restored his lamented son! After this act of duty, he was encouraged in a vision to prosecute his journey without fear; for in Egypt His presence would be with him, and, there, he should become "a great nation."

Catherine. Was this then the beginning of that bondage so famous in the history of the children of Israel?

Mother. Chronologists date the affliction of Abraham's posterity "in a land wherein they were strangers," from his leaving Chaldea, his native country—but the "*bondage*" in Egypt, so familiar to every reader of the Bible, began at this time; "yet their residence in that country commenced (B. C. 1706,*) under the most flattering auspices.

* See Note, p. 25.

They were met on the way by Joseph in his chariot, and in the arms of his long-lost son, the full soul of the happy father received the fruition of earthly bliss! "Let me now die," said he, "since I have seen thy face." When tears and embraces had relieved the unutterable feelings of both, Israel and five of his sons were conducted to the king. The venerable patriarch was seated in the royal presence, and questioned of his age and occupation; and when he answered "thy servants are shepherds," the land of Goshen, a section rich in pasturage, was assigned to them, and the flocks of Pharaoh were committed to their care.

Two years of the famine were spent, when Israel came with his family into Egypt. During five more, it continued with such distressing severity, that all the riches of the inhabitants came into the royal treasury to procure the means of subsistence. When their money was exhausted, they brought in their cattle, of every description, and exchanged them with Joseph for bread. Still the earth withheld her fruits, and the starving people crowded around him: "Shall we die before thine eyes?—take us and our land—we will be servants to Pharaoh, only give us bread."

But this upright minister would not aggrandize even the prince who had elevated him to the second place in the kingdom, to the prejudice of his fellow subjects; but employed the plenitude of his power for the advantage of both. He improved the condition of some by removing them to more convenient habitations, and generously restored four-fifths of the lands of all; retaining but one for the king: and this regulation continued afterwards for ages. One-fifth of all the territories of Egypt belonged to the king, excepting the lands of the priests, who were wholly exempted from tribute.

Catherine. How old was Jacob—when he entered Egypt?

Mother. A hundred and thirty years—and he lived afterwards seventeen in Goshen; respected by the Egyptians, and happy in a flourishing family. His long and checkered life was now drawing to a close. Sickness and exhausted nature had confined him to his bed, when Joseph, whose attendance at the court of Pharaoh kept him neces-

sarily at some distance from Goshen, and who added to his other excellencies that of duteous attention to his father, having heard of his declining state, came immediately to see him. Revived by the sight of his beloved son, and animated by the desire to communicate some things of moment, the venerable patriarch raised himself up in his bed, and collected all his remaining strength for an interesting conversation.

With pious recognition of the extraordinary Providence which had directed his way, and supported him in distress, he was recounting to Joseph some of the most affecting incidents of his life, when indistinctly perceiving the youths, Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Joseph had brought with him to visit their grandsire, he inquired who they were. "They are my sons (returned Joseph,) whom God hath given to me in this place." "I had not thought to see thy face," exclaimed Israel, recollecting the mournful years when he thought his darling was lost to him forever,—“I had not thought to see thy face, and lo! God hath shown me also thy children!”

Then blessing Joseph in the name of “the God who had fed him all his life long,” he embraced the children, and laying his right hand on the head of Ephraim, preferring him before Manasseh, who was the elder, he added these remarkable words, “*The Angel which redeemed me from all evil*, bless the lads—and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Fanny. What do you understand from the words which you call *remarkable* in the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh?

Mother. They are worthy of remark because they show the faith of Jacob in the *better* part of the blessing bestowed on his posterity; for exemption from all *temporal* evil, was no more the lot of Jacob than of any other human being. “Few and *evil* (said he to the Egyptian king) have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage.” The most exquisite sufferings to which the life of man is subjected, had proved the faith of Jacob. Exiled in his youth from his country, and the caresses of his fond mother;

flying from the vengeful hand of an only brother whom he knew he had injured ; disappointed in a love which he had confidently cherished, and defrauded of the reward of his servitude ; his inmost soul afflicted by the loss of his favourite child, though mercifully kept in ignorance of the unnatural hand which inflicted the blow, grieved on another occasion by the perfidious cruelty of Simeon and Levi ; and deprived at length by death of his long-loved Rachel !—these were the sorrows of that pilgrimage which was now coming to a peaceful end. One duty yet remained to be performed—one more important scene to fill the variegated drama.

Abraham, you may remember, was first selected to be the depository of the *special Blessing* : Isaac after him, was preferred to Ishmael, the elder of his two sons ; and Jacob rather than Esau, of the sons of Isaac, to transmit it to their posterity. Jacob is now, in like manner, to hand it down to the chosen individual amongst his numerous children

On his death-bed, therefore, he called them together, and whilst he blessed them severally, expatiating on the various fortunes that should in future days befall them, he distinguished Judah as “ *He* whom his brethren should praise, to whom his father’s children should bow down.”

“ He with whom the *Sceptre* of Israel should remain till *Shiloh* should come, and to whom the gathering of the people should be.”

Fanny. Do the subsequent scriptures show the accomplishment of these prophecies ?

Mother. Beyond all question, as several learned commentators have demonstrated. You will read some of their works, I hope, with great satisfaction. They are highly worthy of your attention, because they evince the truth of sacred writ, by showing how exactly the fortunes of Jacob’s children corresponded with his predictions. This is the only view in which they are interesting to us, that pronounced on Judah alone excepted. That being the grand link in the chain of our story, demands a brief explanation.

The Hebrew word which is rendered *sceptre* in our text, has several other senses in that language. In the same

chapter it is translated *tribe*, which interpretation would more exactly apply to the prophecy of Jacob. The *sceptre* of royalty did indeed proceed from Judah, and it remained with him through a long period of the Israelitish history. The *regal* dignity, in its fullest sense, was taken from them when Judea was subjected to the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and afterwards to the Romans. But the *tribeship* of Judah did actually remain till *Shiloh* came, although the other tribes of Israel had been broken and scattered, long before that event.

The word *Shiloh* is likewise variously interpreted, but however understood, it is agreed by almost all commentators, both ancient and modern, to mean the *sent*—or the Messiah “whom the Father hath *sent*”—to whom the nations were gathered, and in whom all the spiritual promises to Israel will be accomplished.

From this formal division by Israel, the political government of tribes took its rise; Ephraim and Manasseh, constituting two, in the place of their father Joseph, according to the will of the patriarch. The dying exile also took an oath of his sons, especially of Joseph, as possessing chiefly the power to execute his will, to carry him into Canaan, and bury him with his fathers, in the sepulchre which had been purchased by his ancestor when he was a stranger in that land, for the burial-place of Sarah; where Abraham and Isaac, and Rebekah and Leah, had also been laid. Accordingly his remains were carried with great pomp into Canaan, (B. C. 1689,) attended by all the males of his family, and a great retinue of noble Egyptians, and laid in the cave of Macpelah.

Fanny. Deprived now of their natural protector, and wholly in the power of Joseph, his brothers would begin to fear that they might be sacrificed to his just resentment, no longer restrained by reverence for their common parent,

Mother. There you misapprehend his character. This illustrious man was always superior to circumstances. The fear of God was the governing principle of all his actions. His amiable nature was melted to tears when they sent messengers to deprecate his anger, and afterwards came, and prostrating themselves, presented his departed father's request, that he would forgive them! “Am I,”

said he, "in the place of God? It is His to punish, and mine to obey His will. *He* sent me before you into Egypt to save much people alive; now, therefore, fear not; for I will nourish you, and your little ones."

The useful life of Joseph was protracted to the length of an hundred and ten years; and under his affectionate care, his family grew and flourished. (B. C. 1635.) In his last hours, he reminded them that they were to return to their own country, and enjoined them to carry up his bones and deposit them with those of his ancestors. His unmerited kindness to them had secured their obedience, and they preserved his body for that purpose, by embalming it after the manner of the Egyptians. From the sacred records we learn no more of this celebrated ruler, but profane writers have said, that the Egyptians continued long to venerate the name of their benefactor.

To the fascinating power of such an assemblage of endowments, without the alloy of a single vice, as much as to the affecting vicissitudes of his fortune, we may ascribe the pleasure with which we contemplate the beautiful story of Joseph. No human invention has hitherto exceeded in variety and interest the surprising scenes of his life. Nor has all the imagery of poetry ever touched the heart like the pathos of its simple unadorned style. The bursts of nature's own emotions on several occasions are altogether inimitable! and the speech of Judah to the unknown governor of Egypt, particularly, is a finished model of successful pleading. Severely tried in a variety of circumstances, Joseph was faithful in all. The lustre of his piety augmented the splendour of a court, and illumined the gloomy cells of a prison. Diligent and submissive in adversity—active and beneficent in prosperity—as a statesman—a son—and a brother—he was prudent, dutiful, and generous; diffusing blessings while he lived, and erecting for posterity, a monument of transcendent virtue.

EXODUS.

Mother. Many of the facts recorded in the narrative of Moses are corroborated by corresponding stories in the writings of profane authors ; but they shed no light on the train of events which brought the Israelites into the state of servitude and affliction in which we find them at the opening of the book of Exodus.

This name, like that of Genesis, indicates the subject of the book—our young Grecian can give us a literal translation of the word.

Charles. Exodus is derived from the two Greek words, *ex, from* ; and *odos, the way* ; and signify the *going out* or *departure*.

Mother. Yes ; and therefore applied to this book ; because it begins with an account of the Israelites going out of Egypt.

At the conclusion of Genesis and death of Joseph, more than half a century before the period on which we are now entering, we left them in great prosperity in the district of Goshen, enjoying the protection of a benevolent monarch, and the recompense of those advantages he had derived from the wisdom of that statesman.

From that time to the present, there is a chasm which we have no means of supplying ; but must be content to take up the concise account of Moses—that “ a new king had arisen who knew not Joseph.” That is, he had not personally known him, but he probably knew that the ample revenues of Egypt were obtained by the sagacious measures of that excellent minister. When this Pharaoh came to the throne, he found the Israelites a very numerous people—his subjects indeed, but bound by no common tie to his interest. They were separated from the natives, not only by their dwelling in the district of Goshen, but by customs peculiar to themselves, and by the worship of a Deity unknown to them. Six hundred thousand men in

number, situated on the border of Arabia, they presented a convenient ally to that lawless power, in her predatory irruptions into Egypt. To all these alarming circumstances should a spirit of insurrection be added, the Hebrews would be too formidable to be dispersed. "They are more and mightier than we," said this new king to his people. "Let us be wise betimes, and break down their power, by hard labour and severe treatment."

Fanny. One would think that the people, remembering their obligations to Joseph, would refuse to aid in persecuting his brethren.

Mother. The generation that had been preserved by his wisdom and foresight, had passed away. If their children had been instructed in the duty of gratitude, a despotic government might render it of no use to the poor Hebrews. But they had a more efficient friend; that divine Providence which had great things in store for the sons of Abraham, was "on their right hand and on their left,"—they were supported in their affliction, and they continued to grow and prosper.

But what was to be done? This powerful people must be crushed—the murder of their helpless infants would at least arrest the progress of a growing population: accordingly, by a royal edict, every male child of the obnoxious strangers was, from the date of that instrument, consigned to the river Nile—whilst the less dreaded females were allowed to live. Various are the means by which tyranny may depress, and at length triumph over its devoted subjects; but here its purpose was defeated by the excess of its cruelty, for the agents it employed would not concur in a measure so repugnant to the common principles of human nature. They rather secretly assisted in the preservation of the Hebrew children, and the approving smile of Heaven visibly rewarded the benevolent individuals who ventured to disobey the despot.

At this gloomy period of Hebrew history, *Moses*, their deliverer and legislator, was born. (B. C. 1571.) He was the son of Amram, and Jochebed, both of the house of Levi, the third son of Israel. Something more than commonly promising in the countenance of the child, or some happy premonition in the heart of the mother, en-

couraged her to disregard the mandate of the tyrant, and for three months she succeeded in concealing him. When concealment was no longer possible, she carried him privately to the Nile, and laid him on its sedgy border, placing his little sister* at a convenient distance to bring her intelligence of his fate. Here she knew the inhabitants were accustomed to walk, and hoped that some compassionate hand might yet be directed to save him!

To this eventful spot on the very same evening his guardian angel brought the Egyptian princess Thermutis, attended by her ladies. As they rambled on the shore, a cradle half hid in the rushes arrested her eye—curiosity was awakened, and the smiling infant was discovered. The cruel policy of her father left no doubts of the parentage of the foundling; yet she resolved not only to preserve, but to adopt him. The little girl, who had now ventured into the group, offered to bring her a nurse, and the fortunate boy was soon committed to the care of his own mother—who could now receive him with more joyful gratitude than she had dared to indulge when he was first given to her arms! Thus this celebrated individual was rescued, by means seemingly the most accidental, from impending death, to fulfil the prediction delivered to Abraham; to lead his brethren out of Egypt—to sustain them forty years in a wilderness—to institute a body of laws for their government, and finally, to record the whole wonderful transaction with the pen of inspiration.

But notwithstanding the happy Jochebed was now sure of a powerful protector for her child, she did not venture to assert her right to detain him, but restored him when he was weaned, to the princess, and accepted a compensation for the delightful service she had performed. By this lady he was called Moses, because *she drew him out of the water*—and by her care he was educated in the learning of Egypt.

Egypt was, at that time, the residence of the arts—the seat of science. Science had not, indeed, made much progress in the world; but all that she had done was, perhaps, known to that country.

* Miriam, who is often mentioned in the succeeding history.

Catherine. It is very remarkable that Moses should have been not only preserved, but even qualified for his work by the very people who were endeavouring utterly to destroy his nation. Was he ignorant in his youth of his connexion with that people?

Mother. During his earlier years it is probable he thought himself to be in reality what he was called, "the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" for while he was nursed in the house of his father, he could not have been made acquainted with the dangerous secret of his adoption by that princess. But he had learned it some time before his fortieth year. At that time we find he had such a decided predilection for his brethren, that seeing, as he passed along, an Egyptian and a Hebrew engaged in a quarrel, he promptly took part with the latter, and slew their enemy.

This act of violence immediately became public, and endangered his life. The next day, attempting to interpose between two of his own countrymen, whom he found contending angrily together, he was abruptly repulsed with the question, "who made thee a Judge over us—wilt thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?"—This contemptuous rejection of his offered mediation at once suggested to Moses, the necessity of providing for his own safety. He saw the publicity of his rash deed, and the indisposition of his brethren to protect him from the vengeance of Pharaoh. If at this time he was informed of the part he was to act in the emancipation of Israel, he saw that they were not yet prepared to cooperate with him. Retirement from Egypt, for a time, was then the obvious dictate of prudence, and Midian, contiguous, and inhabited by the descendants of Keturah, the last wife of Abraham, presented a convenient retreat. Thither he fled, and found a happy asylum in the house of Jethro, the priest or the prince of that country, in consequence of having assisted his daughters in watering their flocks at a well where he had rested in his way. In process of time, he connected himself with this family, by marrying one of the daughters, and seems to have lived contentedly with them during the life of the king of Egypt, and until another Pharaoh had ascended the throne.

Charles. I observe, mother, that you call all the kings of Egypt by the name of Pharaoh.

Mother. That was a common appellation by which their sovereigns were distinguished in those days, and, in the Egyptian language, signified *king*. He who now wore the crown was hardened in iniquity, and the consequent suffering of the Israelites became intolerable. Their prayers and complaints ascended to the God of their fathers, and the period approached when they should be delivered, and their unfeeling oppressors receive a just retribution.

(B. C. 1491.) Preparatory to this grand event, whilst Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, on a memorable day, at the foot of mount Horeb, he was surprised by the appearance of a Bush in flames; and continuing to burn, yet not consumed! While he gazed on the phenomenon, a voice proceeding from it, commanded him to put off his shoes, for he stood on holy ground.* “I am,” continued the speaker, “the God of thy fathers, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—I have seen the affliction of my people, and am come down to deliver them. I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring my people out of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey.” Astonished at the presence of the Deity, and humbled by a sense of his own insignificance, yet encouraged by the gracious communication, Moses exclaimed, “Who am I that should go to Pharaoh and bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”—“Certainly I will be with you,” said the great Supreme; “and thou shalt say to the children of Israel: I AM (that is, whose existence is not derived) hath sent me unto you, and when thou hast brought them forth, thou shalt worship in this mountain—Go, gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, ‘The Lord God of your fathers has visited you, and will bring you out of affliction, into a land flowing with milk and honey;’ and they shall hearken to thy voice, and ye shall say to the king, ‘The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met us, let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey

*A ceremony in the East to this day; in some circumstances a token of respect, equivalent to uncovering the head among us.

into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God.' I am sure he will not let you go, and I will smite Egypt with all my wonders, and after that he will let you go.'

"And that he may believe that the Lord God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent thee, cast the rod that is in thy hand on the ground." Moses obeyed, and it became a serpent. "Put forth thine hand; and take it up,"—he did so,—and it became a rod in his hand.

These, and other manifestations of transcendent power, ought to have silenced the timid Hebrew, yet, perhaps, remembering that his brethren had once rejected his offered friendship, he hesitated. "I am not eloquent neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant, but am slow of speech." Nor did he obey till he was reassured, that *the Lord* would be with him, that Aaron his brother, "who could speak well," should be associated with him, in the mission to the king, and that he might visit his father's house securely, for those who sought his life were now dead.

His fears thus graciously removed, he took his wife and his two sons, and immediately began his journey. In the wilderness on his way, he was met by his brother, already instructed in the great work on which they were about to enter; and communicated to him the awful interview to which he had been admitted, at the foot of Horeb.

Empowered by supreme authority, and enlightened by divine inspiration, a short conference matured their plan. They proceeded into Egypt, gathered the elders of their people together, and laid before them the command they had received, performing in their presence several miracles, the signs and the seals of their mission.

Catherine. What kind of an officer was an Elder of Israel at that time?—A people completely subjugated, having authority at all, seems to be a paradox.

Mother. Though their condition in Egypt had become very discouraging, and might almost preclude every ray of hope, yet many of them would doubtless confide in the promise, that they should in due time become an independent nation. To this end it was necessary, that they

should be held together by some peculiar regulations, otherwise they must have been lost in the course of several centuries among the natives of that country. These would naturally be dictated by the heads of their tribes, or principal families, who were, in all circumstances, honoured and obeyed in ancient times. They are here called Elders, and were the representatives of their nation, when they acknowledged the goodness of God, in sending Moses and Aaron to their relief.

The acquiescence of the chiefs being secured, the ambassadors repaired to the king, and demanded in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, the liberation of His people, that they might go into the adjacent wilderness to sacrifice. But the demand was rebellion! Possessed of absolute power, and satisfied with his own sufficiency, the king of Egypt recognized no authority in the voice of Jehovah! "Who is Jehovah," said the imperious despot, "that I should obey *his* voice?" Vainly then did Moses and Aaron repeat His command, and urge the necessity of obedience—a sacrifice was but a pretext to indulge the idleness of the Hebrews, and their advocates were the instigators of insurrection! New burdens were, therefore, added, and their tasks were increased beyond the possibility of performance.

From the circumstance of their being "tasked in making bricks" and employed in the "erection of cities," there seems reason to believe that this oppressed people were now labouring in the erection of the pyramids, those stupendous monuments of Egyptian greatness. They had hitherto been furnished with straw, a necessary ingredient with them, in the manufacture of bricks, of which a certain number had been required daily at their hands: but now they were obliged to gather straw for themselves, whilst yet the usual number of bricks was exacted! To enforce the impracticable order, measures of the severest rigour were used by the overseers, until the anguish of the sufferers broke out into passionate complaints against Moses and Aaron. The monarch still deaf to entreaty, they saw no prospect of the promised liberation, and in the ambassadors of Heaven, only the odious cause of accumulated evils!

Repeated interviews with the king of Egypt, and reiterated demands for the freedom of the afflicted Hebrews, producing nothing but contumely and defiance, the arm of Moses was now stretched out and sustained and directed by the God of nature; miracle upon miracle, astonished the infatuated monarch, and overwhelmed with distress his devoted subjects. Their waters were turned into blood, and frogs and vermin infested the whole land. Their cattle were swept off by disease, and the people groaned under the anguish of loathsome boils. Tremendous storms of thunder and hail destroyed vegetation, and the beasts of the field. Swarms of locusts covered the whole face of Egypt; and impenetrable darkness obscured the light of the sun for three whole days!

Charles. Did the Egyptians endure all this, without interposing for their own relief?

Mother. They did not. They besought Pharaoh to "let the people go." "Knowest thou not yet (said they) that Egypt is destroyed?" But they entreated in vain! Deceived by the arts of his magicians, who were permitted to imitate some of these preternatural effects, his proud heart was hardened. Sometimes overpowered by the cries of his people, and his own aggravated sufferings, he was ready to submit to the Hand that inflicted them, and expel the people for whose sake it was displayed, with all that was required. But again exasperated by seeing the district of Goshen, their habitation, exempted from these accumulated horrors, he detained them, and withstood the plainest manifestations of the Divine will.

One judgment remained—one more severe than had yet tried the obdurate king. The angel of death stretches out his destructive arm over their whole land—and the silence of midnight was disturbed by the cries of grief and horror! The cup of anguish is now indeed filled to the brim—loud lamentation proceeds from every house, and parental love discovers one tangible nerve even in the inflexible heart of Pharaoh; for the heir of his throne is laid low, undistinguished among the dying multitudes—the first-born of every family, from the palace to the prison!

Touched on this tender string, he now felt that there

was a power capable of subduing even him ! And uncertain where the angel would stay his destroying hand, he called hastily for Moses and Aaron, who were employed with their brethren in the celebration of a solemn feast, and turned them out of his dominion. "Get you forth," cried the distracted prince, "from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel ; serve the Lord, as ye have said ; take your flocks and your herds, and begone, and bless me also."

Charles. Pharaoh then was truly humbled, when he would condescend to ask for the prayers of his enemies ?

Mother. His own heart was still his greatest enemy. You will presently see, that his transient submission was extorted by his fears alone, and was not the effect of genuine faith and repentance.

Fanny. The feast of which you just now spoke, I believe was the Passover ?

Mother. The feast of the Passover, (of which you will hear, when we come to speak of the Mosaical institutions) was first appointed on that memorable night, and handed down to successive generations, as the memorial of their deliverance from the "house of bondage."

Whilst the Hebrews were engaged in this act of obedience, they were urged to depart from a place upon which every moment of their stay seemed to bring additional evils. Before the day appeared, therefore, without time to prepare food for their journey, they were obliged to set out. This deliverance, however, was not altogether unexpected. The gracious promise given to their fathers, had led them to look for the appointed time. In full confidence of its arrival, the body of Joseph had been embalmed and kept in a coffin, and was now, agreeably to their engagement, carried with them out of Egypt. (B. C. 1491.)

Charles. Their coffins must have been of more durable materials than ours ; otherwise, they could not have removed the remains of Joseph, perhaps a century after his burial.

Mother. Nearly a century and an half had elapsed, since his death. I follow our common translation in using the word *coffin*, but we must not associate with it the idea

of a receptacle like our own. It is perfectly well known, that the sepulchres of the ancients were vaults hewn with immense labour out of the solid rock, and so imperishable, that they are shown at the present day, among the curiosities of the Holy land.*

The "land of Goshen," the habitation of the Israelites, lay near the north-western termination of the Red Sea. Hence, they might, by an easy journey, have reached their promised land, but much was yet to be done before they were prepared to enjoy that repose.

Born and educated in slavery, and amongst an idolatrous people, they necessarily partook of the moral debasement incidental to that unhappy condition. To ameliorate their manners, therefore, and qualify them for the high and conspicuous rank they were about to assume, as an independent nation, and God's peculiar people, they were led into the wilderness of Shur, and there instructed by a constitution framed especially for their government.

The threatened judgments seem already to have been executed, but neither judgment nor mercy had yet subdued the desperate Pharaoh. We must now return to our narrative, and accompany him to his final destruction.

Though the king of Egypt had so far relented, that he had suffered the Israelites to depart, and had even entreated them to "pray for him, also"—yet they had scarcely left his dominions, when his avaricious soul accused him of folly in releasing so numerous a body of profitable subjects.

He had seen that that despised people were the peculiar care of an uncontrollable Power; but had experienced too, that He was also a merciful Being, who seemed to have been propitiated even by his insincere promises. But he might be like the gods of Egypt—a local deity,—he might protect his people in Goshen, and abandon them in the desert! Thus beguiled to his own ruin, Pharaoh hastily collected his armies, his horsemen, and his chariots—a very great multitude, and pursuing the Israelites, overtook them, encamped by the sea.

Catherine. Of what sea do you speak?

* See Clarke's Travels in the Holy Land.

Mother. By *the Sea*, or emphatically *the great Sea*, in scripture, is generally understood the Mediterranean. But the sea here spoken of, was the Arabian gulf, or Red Sea. Instead of passing from its northern point, near which the land of Goshen was situated, immediately into the promised land, which might have been effected in a few days, the Israelites were directed to proceed along its western border, and encamp near a place called Pi-hahiroth.

Here obstructed by the water on one hand, and by mountains on the other, they seemed to offer an easy conquest to the enraged potentate and his mighty hosts. Terrified and disheartened, they upbraided Moses and Aaron. "Did we not say unto thee in Egypt, that it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than to die in the wilderness?"

Catherine. It seems wonderful that this people should be discouraged by any dangers, however great, when so many miracles had been exhibited, expressly to show them that they were under the care of Omnipotence.

Mother. Nay, more, when they had at the very moment a visible emblem of his presence! for it is said, "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light."

When their pursuers came within view, their intrepid leader aroused their fainting hope by the assurance, that the Egyptians whom they then saw, they should see no more forever; for the Lord of Hosts would fight for them. "Bid the people go forward," said their Supreme Commander to Moses, "but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch thine hand over the sea and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

Moses obeyed, and the "waters were driven back by a strong east wind, which blew all that night, so that they passed over in perfect safety; the divided waters erecting a wall on either side! Meanwhile, their pillar of light had removed from before them, and stood between their camp and that of their enemies; illuminating the one, and involving the other in total darkness!

But this last token of divine forbearance was contemned

by the infatuated king, equally with those that had gone before. He rushed blindly on, not knowing perhaps, whither he went, and was overwhelmed by the returning waters, so that of all the dreaded host of Pharaoh, a few dead bodies cast up by the waves were all that the morning light discovered to the triumphant Hebrews!

You remember the prophecy delivered to Abraham in the plain of Mamre—that Sarai should be the mother of nations—that his posterity should be afflicted in a land wherein they were strangers—that they should be delivered in the fourth generation—that their oppressors should be punished, and “afterward they should come out with great substance;” and here you see the exact accomplishment. The family of Jacob consisted but of seventy or seventy-five persons, when they came into Egypt; they were subjugated, and treated with excessive rigour; and now were brought out, exactly four hundred and thirty years afterward, with six hundred thousand men, besides women and children; they came out “with great substance,” and their oppressors were punished.

Fanny. What was the breadth of the sea at the place of this astonishing passage?

Mother. The sacred record is silent on that question: but some pains have been taken to ascertain it. The place is believed to be known, and is said to be two or three miles across.

Fanny. But may not this be satisfactorily accounted for on natural principles, without supposing a miracle? The Israelites perhaps took advantage of an ebb tide, and the Egyptians were drowned in its rising.

Mother. It is not probable that Pharaoh and his officers knew less of the tides of the Red Sea, than did the Hebrews: besides, the reflux of the tide would not satisfy the words of Moses; “the waters were a *wall* on the right hand and on the left.” But if we are inclined to give up the fact because infidels have pronounced it impossible, we may with equal reason surrender every miracle, for they have rejected them all, though established by incontrovertible proof. In this case it would be miraculous, that a multitude of people should be persuaded that they had passed the bed of a sea without wetting their feet; if

they had done no such thing. Even the children, who but indistinctly remembered the fact, when they heard it recited by Moses, and saw it recorded in a book as a perpetual appeal to their grateful and undivided devotion, would naturally inquire about the manner of an occurrence so seemingly incredible; and if they had discovered an imposture, some traces of a refutation would have reached us. But any thing like this is so far from appearing, that we have traditions of the miracle in the books of profane authors.

Catherine. The people for whose sake it was performed would surely be very sensibly affected by their extraordinary deliverance.

Mother. They were at the moment, and they celebrated the praises of Jehovah, "their strength and salvation," in sublime strains, accompanied with instruments of music and dancing. The song of Moses, with the chorus of Miriam, and the women of Israel, on this memorable occasion, are recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. The poetry of the Hebrews, of which you have many fine specimens in the sacred writings, abounds, like that of all eastern nations, with strong and lofty images. It was evidently written in measured numbers, but whether in rhyme, as we generally construct our lines, is uncertain, for the original pronunciation of the language has long been lost. Rhymes, however, are so agreeable to our ears, that I have undertaken to give you this lyric ode in English verse. Fanny will read it to us.

SONG OF MOSES AND MIRIAM.

Fanny. Begin the sacred dance—the timbrels bring,
Daughters of Israel, arise and sing.
To him, my father's God, my strength, the Lord
Who triumphed gloriously—the praise accord.
My fortress, and my Saviour, he became,
He leads to war—the Lord his holy name!
Let Jacob's grateful sons prepare a place
Where he may dwell among their favoured race.
The people he redeemed, his mercy led
Victorious, through the sea's exhausted bed.
The seas are thine!—Obedient to thy will,
The rolling waves of Araby stood still.

Raised by Jehovah's blast, that awful night
 Beheld the barrier, wave on wave, upright.
 Thy desperate foes pursue the hallowed path,
 Darkness and tempest speak thy wasting wrath:
 The flood returns—proud Egypt's vaunted host,
 Their king—their chiefs—their chariots, all, are lost!
 Low in the whelming waters of the deep,
 Israel's oppressor,—Pharaoh's armies sleep!
 The men of Palestine shall trembling hear
 Moab and Edom melt with grief and fear.
 Which of the gods to whom the nations bend
 Can winds and floods to their deliverance send?
 Glorious in holiness—thy power exceeds,
 In praises fearful—doing wondrous deeds!
 Thine is the sword and shield—thy own right hand
 Shall lead thy chosen to the promised land.
 To him my strength, my father's God, the Lord,
 Who triumphed gloriously—the praise accord.
 Thou, Lord, shalt bring us to thine heritage,
 And rule—our sovereign king, from age to age.

Catherine. Our partiality for any essay of yours, mother, will certainly decide in favour of your versification. I have kept my eye on the text whilst my sister was reading, and find that you have not varied in sentiment.

Mother. It would have been happy for the Israelites if such sentiments of pious gratitude had governed their whole conduct. But when they had travelled but a few days in the desert of Sinai, and began to experience the inconveniences and privations inseparable from their unsettled condition, they looked back with regret on their comparative ease in Egypt, and again assailed Moses with the cruel complaint—"You have brought us to die in the wilderness." Yet mercies and miracles continued!—To engage their confidence, as well as to provide for their real necessities, they were graciously assured that they should "continue to behold the glory of the Lord;" that flesh should be given them to eat, and bread from heaven should satisfy their hunger. And accordingly in the evening an immense number of quails alighted round the camp; and the following morning, their bread descended indeed from heaven! A small white substance, "like coriander seed, and sweet like honey," as it is described,

and therefore called *Manna*, was found covering the earth.

"This," said Moses, "is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. Gather of it every man according to the number which are in his tent, and let none be kept until the morning." Some, notwithstanding, presumptuously kept the manna over the night, and in the morning it was putrid. Moses was displeased at their disobedience, and repeated the command, to gather every morning sufficient only for the day. But on the sixth day, when they went out for their daily provision, they found that a double quantity had fallen. Greatly surprised, the rulers repaired to Moses to report the phenomenon, and to inquire into the reason.

"To-morrow," replied he, "is the rest of the Holy *Sabbath*; take a part of the manna, therefore, and lay it up for the ensuing day." They did so, and found that it kept perfectly good. Yet not fully persuaded of the fact that Moses had communicated, some of the people went out on the seventh day to look for manna; they found none; but received this reproof: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See—for that the Lord hath given you the *Sabbath*; therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." From that time to the period of their pilgrimage they were fed with manna. An Omer, a measure something less than our gallon, was carefully preserved to show to their posterity the miracle that had sustained them.

Fanny. Why did the people hesitate to believe a circumstance so probable as that of distinguishing the *Sabbath* from a common day?

Mother. If the extraordinary quantity of manna had appeared on the day previous to the *Sabbath* they had been accustomed to observe, it would seem natural that they should at once acquiesce in the command of Moses. But the difficulty he experienced, together with the emphatic language of the text, have led some of our best commentators to the conclusion, that a change unexpected to them at this time was made.

The seventh day of the creation being coincident with

the first *whole* day of Adam's life, he would of course begin to reckon his week, and his year, on that day; and consequently the day which Christians now celebrate, was the Sabbath appointed in Paradise, and continued by all people, however widely dispersed, until the Israelites came up out of Egypt. From that period, the *chosen* people were to be distinguished and separated from all others by their national institutions, some of which seem to have no other object.

The beginning of their year had been changed, when the Passover was instituted, from the autumnal to the vernal equinox, as a memorial of their deliverance at that time from "the house of bondage:" and a correspondent change is supposed to have been made in the wilderness in the beginning of their week, to remove the temptation of mingling with the heathens in idolatrous worship. By removing their Sabbath to the seventh day, the Israelites would be engaged in their common occupations on the holy-day of their neighbours, and thus be out of the way of allurements, which we find did afterwards, in some instances, entice them from their duty.

Catherine. Mother, do you think it is immaterial whether Saturday or Sunday is kept holy?

Mother. The command is to devote to God, in a special manner, one-seventh of our time. That being done, the moral nature of the command is answered.

Let us now return to the Israelites, who, after eleven encampments, had come to a place called Rephidim, where they found no water. Again they repeated, with additional bitterness, their accustomed reproach—"Thou hast brought us and our children, and our cattle, up hither to perish with thirst." The bounteous hand that had fed them when hungry, now supplied them with drink.

The touch of the rod of Moses brought water from a rock, and the copious stream refreshed the remainder of their journey. The Pillar of Light seems, from that time, to have led the people along its margin, for we hear no complaints of scarcity of water, for many succeeding years, although they travelled in a dry and barren land.

All these magnificent events could not be confined to the knowledge of the persons for whose correction or re-

lief they were originally displayed. Their fame went abroad, and Jethro, the prince of Midian, a worshipper of Jehovah, came to unite with Israel in homage to their Almighty Deliverer,—and to restore at the same time his daughter, and her sons, who had been sent back to his guardianship, whilst Moses was engaged in his perilous mission to Pharaoh.

Remaining with the Israelites some days, Jethro took a friendly interest in their affairs, and assisted them by his prudent counsel. He saw with concern the incessant labours of his son-in-law in the government of Israel, and suggested the propriety of calling to his aid, inferior magistrates, who might take cognizance of the lesser causes, while the greater only should be referred to his own decision. And “able men,” he added, ought to be selected—“Such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.” Such were accordingly appointed, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. Bread and water, the most imperative demands of nature, having been already provided, Moses was now left at greater liberty to attend to the great work of legislation, for which they were chiefly detained in an inhospitable wilderness—and it commenced in the third month after their departure from Egypt.

Encamped in the desert of Sinai, before the celebrated mount of that name, the whole congregation were gathered together, and solemnly reminded that their enemies had been signally chastised for disobedience, while they “had been borne as on eagles’ wings.” “Now, therefore,” said Jehovah, “if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me, above all people—for all the earth is mine.” “All that the Lord commands we will do,” was the ready answer of a people unacquainted with their own weakness, and ignorant of the purity and extent of the laws about to be proclaimed.

But when assembled at the foot of Sinai, to receive on a subsequent day the covenant they had not hesitated to subscribe, the terrible ensigns of infinite power, and rigorous justice, were exhibited to their view—they shrunk dismayed from the Divine presence! Fierce lightnings flashed through the dark cloud that enveloped the mount—

tremendous thunderings shook its base—an invisible trumpet sounded, long and loud—and amidst these appalling circumstances, an audible voice pronounced the Ten Commandments, the substance of the Hebrew code, and the immutable foundation of all subsequent law. The terrified people listened with reverence—but entreated that Moses might thenceforth be their mediator, and themselves be excused from again hearing the voice of Jehovah!

They were permitted to retire, and their leader alone was summoned to ascend the burning summit, to receive further instruction: and forty days this highly honoured mortal remained in more intimate communion with his Creator than had ever been vouchsafed to man since the fall of Adam.

As the decalogue exacted first the homage due to the Sovereign of the universe, so now the medium by which that homage should be offered was first appointed. The pattern of a tabernacle, or place for public worship, with all its apparatus, both for ornament and convenience, was exhibited to Moses, and instructions the most minute were given him, to construct one of similar form, and of costly materials, together with every necessary utensil for offering sacrifices.

Catherine. In what manner do you suppose the *pattern* of a tabernacle was exhibited to Moses?

Mother. Whether we suppose Moses to have been favoured with a full revelation of the meaning and end of his emblematical dispensation, or, taking the words literally, understand that a tabernacle with its whole apparatus was represented in vision, on the mount—the words are explained, for their meaning is clearly that by this view of the *pattern* he was enabled to institute a corresponding ceremonial of worship.

In this awful interview Moses was commanded also to make vestments of a particular form, for Aaron, and for his sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, and when they were arrayed, to consecrate them all to the service of the altar.

The habits of the inferior priests were to be of white linen, because that material might be kept perfectly clean, and by this elegant emblem, the worshippers were instruct-

ed in that purity of heart, required of all who approach the Sanctuary.

Aaron, who was constituted the High Priest, was to be more splendidly dressed. Several robes, extremely fine both in colour and texture, were to conceal his whole person—a girdle curiously wrought, confined them to his waist, and two onyx stones engraved with the names of the sons of Israel decorated the shoulders. For his head was a mitre, or crown, with a plate of pure gold on the forehead, inscribed with the words, HOLINESS, TO THE LORD.

But the most remarkable part of this magnificent habit was a Breast-plate whose mysterious properties have exercised the ingenuity of critics.

Twelve precious stones, set in gold, and engraved each, with the name of a son, or a head of a tribe of Israel, were placed on its surface—and something which was called the URIM and the THUMMIM inserted within.

Catherine. What were the Urim and the Thummim?

Mother. The words Urim and Thummim signify light and perfection; but whether in this place they denote a substance within the breast-plate, or whether those abstract qualities were for special purposes imparted to it, we know not. All that the words of Moses enable us to discover is, that when the high priest appeared before the Mercy Seat, arrayed in his pontifical robes, to ask counsel in momentous affairs, the Urim and the Thummim were the medium by which the answer was received.*

Fanny. And what was the design of so splendid an ornament as twelve precious stones?

Mother. Some have supposed, that, containing in the engravings all the letters of the alphabet, the superior sparkling or occasional protuberance of certain letters, might indicate the answer to the inquiry of Aaron. But this hypothesis is supported by no evidence from the words of Moses. It is probable that no more was meant, than to represent by this silent metaphor, the whole congregation of Israel, in whose behalf the priest officiated. To my mind, this emphatic breast-plate is a beautiful emblem of

* See *Prideaux's Connexions*.

a parent ;—almost forgetting his own necessities, he comes to the Throne of Grace with the names of his children engraved on his heart, and for them he implores counsel, protection and pardon !

The manner of consecrating the priests—the morning and evening sacrifice—were at this interview prescribed, and the weekly sabbath again strictly enjoined. And here let me observe, that, much as the rigid letter of this invaluable institution is now contested, no one precept of the moral law is more frequently or imperatively enforced :—“ My sabbaths ye shall keep, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.” And lastly, two tables of stone, containing the Ten Commandments, “ written with the finger of God,” were delivered to Moses.

But while the Hebrew chief was thus transcendently exalted, the unhappy people of his charge were debasing themselves. Already forgetful of the unparalleled benefit bestowed upon them, and in open violation of their recent engagement, to have “ no other God before Him who had brought them out of the house of bondage,” they had set up an idol ; and Moses was hastened by their all-seeing Judge, to descend, and witness their merited punishment—even their utter extermination—whilst himself should be signally exalted ! Solicitous for the glory of that Name that had been graciously attached, in the sight of all Egypt, to his undeserving nation, rather than his own elevation, he ventured to linger in the mount, whilst he implored the “ God of Israel” not to abandon his people, and thereby afford an occasion of exultation to their enemies.

Returning to the camp he found the whole assembly dancing and singing before their idol. Impatient of their detention in the desert, and the long absence of their conductor, they had compelled his brother to make them an image of gold, to go before them to Canaan, and had proclaimed before it—“ These be thy *gods*, O Israel, which brought thee out of Egypt !”

Catherine. Did Aaron, their high priest, participate in the monstrous defection ?

Mother. He had not yet been invested with that dignified character ; but he had been the minister of God, and

ought to have resisted the clamours of a turbulent people, whose crime can be but little extenuated, by the charitable supposition, that they meant not to impair their allegiance to their legitimate sovereign, but merely to erect an ensign or standard to go before them; to which, among a people addicted to Polytheism, they had learned to ascribe a sort of mystical influence. Moses had been forty days in the mount; they saw it involved in smoke, and the "glory of the Lord," like devouring fire, on its summit. He might have perished in its flame, and left them without a visible captain—still their offence was most flagrant, both in its nature and circumstances, as we learn unequivocally from the signal punishments inflicted—three thousand of the principal rebels put to death by the hands of their more loyal brethren!

On this occasion the illustrious Chieftain gave a noble example of his disinterestedness, by intreating, that his own life might be accepted as an expiation for the sins of his people; that he might be excluded from the promised land rather than that the whole people of his charge should be cut off; but a full pardon was granted for all except the leaders, on his intercession, and the penitent congregation testified their gratitude by contributing materials for the tabernacle and the vestments of the priests, with profuse liberality. Silver and gold, and brass and jewels; threads, spun by the women, of purple, of blue, and scarlet, and fabrics of the finest texture were brought in till all was completed.

Charles. There is, I remember, a very long description of the tabernacle, but I cannot understand it. Will you, mother, give us some idea of it?

Mother. The directions given to Moses, for constructing the tabernacle, were very particular; they will therefore be tedious to you. They were necessarily minute, because every part was significant; a general description, however, will suffice our present purpose. The tabernacle, strictly so called, was a large tent thirty-two cubits* in length, and twelve in breadth, divided into two apartments. In the inner one, stood the *Ark of the Covenant*; that is, a

* This cubit was half a yard of our measure, according to Burder.

chest containing the two tables of stone which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai ; this was denominated the *Most holy place*. A veil of singular beauty, and impenetrable thickness concealed this sacred depository, and excluded every creature, except the High Priest. Without the veil, in the second division, stood an altar for burning incense ; a table, called the table of show bread, and a candlestick with seven lamps, of exquisite workmanship, to keep a light continually burning. To these two apartments, was appended a third, which was called the court of the tabernacle, and was an hundred cubits long and fifty broad. This court was appropriated to the altar for burnt-offerings—the laver or bath, to purify the priests, before they went within to officiate, and for the reception of the people who waited in prayer whilst their sacrifices were consuming. This last was open at the top, the other two divisions were covered. The whole was surrounded by curtains of rich tapestry, and comprehended under the general appellation of the *Tabernacle*, or, the *Sanctuary*. Staves of wood, overlaid with gold, were prepared to carry both the ark and the table, from place to place.

The table and the candlestick were of gold, and the ark was inlaid, within and without, with that precious metal. The cover, which was called the *Mercy Seat*, was of pure gold, and over it two cherubim of beaten gold, extended their wings ; between them, and over the ark, which contained the *Covenant*, the God of *Mercy* was pleased to manifest his presence, and to answer the supplications of his people.

Fanny. A *Covenant*, I understand to mean a contract ; why were the tables called a *Covenant* ?

Mother. Because, on them were written the conditions on which the Great Supreme, on the one part, had condescended to promise certain blessings to the posterity of Jacob ; and they, on the other, had accepted the terms, and solemnly promised obedience ; the tables were, therefore, a *Covenant*, or contract.

Catherine. The manufacture of all these curious articles would require a considerable knowledge of the fine arts.

Mother. Egypt, the native country of the Hebrews,

possessed all the requisite knowledge in very early times—but the sacred furniture was not committed to the previous acquirements of the travellers. Several persons were expressly named to Moses, and endowed with extraordinary talents for the execution of the work.

(B. C. 1490.) Every thing being finished, according to the model prescribed in the mount, the sacred sanctuary was raised, the veil was suspended, the altars, the table, and the candlestick, were fixed in their places, on the first day of the second year of their abode in the wilderness of Sinai. The princes of the tribes presented their oblations—silver and golden vessels, and cattle and herds, for the dedication. Sacrifice and incense were offered, and the most glorious demonstration of the divine presence attested their acceptance. Light, insupportably resplendent, filled the tabernacle of Jehovah, so that not even Moses could remain within, while the bright cloud descended, and covered the exterior. So long as this authoritative signal remained in that position, and ever afterwards, during their long pilgrimage, whensoever it was assumed—the Israelites rested. When the cloud rose and moved forward, they followed; their benignant conductor irradiating by night, and over-shadowing by day, their trackless course through the burning desert of Arabia.

LEVITICUS.

Mother. The sacred tabernacle and its furniture being in perfect readiness for the religious service of the children of Israel, the book of Leviticus proceeds to prescribe its ordinances, and the duties of the *Levites*, its ministers. It is chiefly devoted to these details, without the intervention of much incident.

Fanny. We are to have a dull conversation, then, this evening ; but pray let me ask, is it necessary that we should be made acquainted with a system in which we are wholly unconcerned ?

Mother. If that were the case, I would not ask your attention. I have known your seniors in age, my dear, commit the same error into which you have fallen ; I would rectify that, by showing you our interest in the Jewish economy, although I do not intend to be so minute as you seem to apprehend. The scheme of salvation is one and the same from all eternity, although it is exhibited under different dispensations. That gospel which was published by the Redeemer of the world—and confirmed by his death, was prefigured in emblems, by the ceremonial law of the Israelites. They explain and establish one another ; the analogy has been elucidated by many excellent volumes, some of which you will read with more pleasure than I can hope to excite, yet we must not pass them in silence.

The laws of Moses have been divided into three classes, Moral, Typical or Ceremonial, and Political. The first are of universal and immutable obligation ; originally given to man, and since found impressed on the heart of every creature, endued with reason and conscience—but now first delivered in written characters, and on tables of *stone* to denote their permanent nature. The second, in shadows too obscure to be fully understood at the time of their prescription,—yet sufficiently clear to elicit and sustain the faith of its subjects,—indicated the pollution and

guilt of every individual, and the one great sacrifice which should procure purification and pardon. The third, in subserviency to that great end, erected a wall of partition between the posterity of Abraham and their Gentile neighbours, and preserved them, through all the revolutions of ages, a separate people. Conformity to its precepts was never required of any other people, not even of those who resided among them.

Fanny. I had not supposed that they were so very important—we shall thank you for examples of them; especially of the two last mentioned.

Mother. In the course of our narrative I shall find an opportunity of gratifying you.

The first care of Moses, when he had reared and dedicated the sanctuary, was to consecrate its ministers. Seven days successively, they waited in the outer court; were washed with water, anointed with holy oil, provided for that purpose exclusively, and they offered burnt offerings in the presence of the whole nation. On the eighth day, when the animals which were to be offered as sacrifices were killed, and laid in order on the altar, fire, immediately from heaven, descended and consumed them! This was an event unexpected by the people, and they hailed it with loud acclamations of triumph and praise! No other fire being afterwards permitted to be used in the tabernacle, it became the duty of the priests to keep this sacred flame continually alive. Two of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, very soon transgressed the divine command, by putting “strange fire,” as it is termed, into their censors to burn incense; for which offence they were instantly destroyed by the element which they dared to profane. “Fire came out from the Lord, and devoured them.”

Fanny. Were not the people greatly shocked to find their priests, whom they had seen but lately consecrated by so many solemn forms, transgressing a divine law?

Mother. They had a right to expect the most scrupulous care in the conduct of their ministers, but they would discover their error, if they had imagined that solemn forms would sanctify the heart, and enable them to render perfect obedience. The purification of Aaron and his sons by water, and their sin-offerings so often repeated,

were designed to exhibit the holiness of their office, and their own utter unworthiness; but could effect no change in them. The sin of Nadab and Abihu, is supposed to have been committed in a state of intoxication, as it was immediately followed by a command to the priests, to "drink no wine or strong drink when they went into the sanctuary," *lest they should die*. Their awful punishment was just, and their brethren were forbidden to disfigure themselves by exterior signs of mourning—"for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you," said Moses. "He will be glorified before all the people," and in the concise and emphatical language of Scripture, he adds, "and Aaron held his peace."

Besides the regulations for the personal government of the priests and Levites, the book of Leviticus, as I have already intimated, prescribes the sacrifices, their manner, and periods of celebration; because those ordinances were to be administered by the *Levites*.

Sacrifices were stated, or occasional; of the latter, were such as were offered on special occasions, or by individuals, for propitiation, atonement, or thanksgiving; the former were periodical, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Every day, morning, and evening; on the weekly Sabbath; at the new moons, and with extraordinary solemnity on the tenth day of the seventh month annually. This last was termed "the great day of Atonement," when the people were enjoined, in an especial manner, to come with contrite hearts, and confess their sins; and sacrifice was made for every soul in the nation. On that day alone, the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, within the veil—the whole prefigured the one great atonement which should be made by the Redeemer for the sins of all mankind.

So great a number of sacrifices would necessarily require some variety in their qualifications, and manner of offering. Three particulars invariably observed in every offering for transgression, it is proper to point out to you, because they are expressive emblems in the scheme of salvation by a divine Mediator. 1st. The animal offered must be gentle and innocent in its nature, and perfect in its kind. 2d. The offerer must lay his hand on the head of the vic-

tim, to signify the transfer of his guilt to the substitute, who was accepted in his stead. And, 3d, before the victim was burnt, it must be slain, and a part of its blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat, to show, that without the shedding of blood, pardon could not be obtained.

Sacrifices and oblations were made periodically, on three great national festivals.

The first was the "Passover, or feast of unleavened bread;" instituted on the night of their departure from Egypt—and perpetuated in commemoration of that deliverance. On the fourteenth day of the first month of their Ecclesiastical year, they killed a lamb of the first year, one for each family—and ate it on the fifteenth, in the evening, with bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. Seven days the feast was kept: the first and last were holydays, on which no servile work was done. Offerings were made every day, and unleavened bread was eaten the whole time.

Next came the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, to commemorate the giving of the law from mount Sinai: and last, "the feast of Tabernacles," a time of great rejoicing in the seventh month. During the week of its celebration, the Israelites left their houses, and lived in the fields, in arbours formed of the branches of the willow and palm, in grateful recollection of their pilgrimage, when they had no permanent dwelling.

The gladness and triumph with which the "feast of Tabernacles" was kept, is understood to prefigure a glorious state of the gospel church; and the "day of atonement," which occurred ten days before that festival, represents the deep and genuine penitence indispensably necessary to a proper reception of such blessings.

They had also the "feast of first-fruits," or in-gathering of their harvest, when they were required to bring an offering of the produce of the earth, before they applied the smallest portion to their own use.

Every seventh year was a "Sabbatical year," or year of rest; in which their land must not be cultivated—the sixth harvest always producing sufficient for the supply of three years—and every fiftieth was a Jubilee, or year of liberty. It would of course fall on a Sabbatical year, and bring with it the grateful rest of that welcome season,

as well as its own peculiar advantages. The morning of the jubilee was triumphantly announced throughout the whole land, by the sound of silver trumpets, "proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound." Every *Hebrew* servant and proselyted Gentile was released on that happy day, every debt was remitted; and lands that had been alienated, either from poverty or choice, were restored to their original possessors.

Catherine. How could such a restitution be required, without violating the right of a purchaser?

Mother. No purchaser could be ignorant of this condition of a sale, because the price of an estate was always in proportion to the number of years that should elapse before the coming of the jubilee.

Charles. Pray what was the object of this law?

Mother. The immediate reason is given in the words pronounced on mount Sinai, when the statute was enacted—"The land is *mine*, it shall not be sold for ever;" and ultimately, that of keeping the tribes of Israel distinct. Moreover, it had the salutary tendency to preserve a certain degree of equality in a nation of brothers—the branches of one stock, who, for the same benevolent reason, were forbidden to exact of one another exorbitant interest on loans.

Fanny. It is plain that these festivals could not have been celebrated in the desert.

Mother. Many of them could not, though others might have been kept there. The Passover was celebrated, and other sacrifices were offered; but their abode in the wilderness was a state of probation—a seminary of education. The scheme of their government was promulgated in the desert, but could be completely brought into exercise, only in their settled habitation. Without reference to that, many of their laws would have been nugatory. They neither planted nor reaped there; consequently had no *first-fruits* to bring to the altar; nor would it have been necessary to prohibit certain articles of food, and allow others to be eaten, which was done at this time, where such articles might not be found to exist.

Charles. What possible good could be promoted by regulations concerning food?

Mother. Every divine precept, my son, must be founded in wisdom and goodness. Some articles of food, not unwholesome in their nature, might possibly become so, in a particular climate, hot and arid, like certain parts of Canaan, and were therefore forbidden.

But the prohibition was principally designed, amongst other regulations expressly for that purpose, to discourage the Israelites from associating with their heathen neighbours, who ate of the food denied to them. And yet another moral lesson was figuratively suggested by the instincts of the selected animals. The useful—the cleanly—the docile, intimated the purity and obedience required in themselves; whilst the contrary manners were condemned by the prohibition of all such as were fierce or filthy in their nature.

Fanny. How was the expense of a system so costly to be supported?

Mother. It was indeed very costly. The feast of tabernacles alone, was held at the expense of an hundred and ninety-two animals, besides flour and oil. A sacred treasury was formed of contributions, collected both from the community and individuals. The firstlings of all their flocks and herds were required for the service of the sanctuary, and the support of the priests, and made a principal share of the stock.

The sacrifices for individuals were furnished, though not offered as heretofore, by themselves; but delivered to the priests, who alone could perform that service.

Charles. I do not understand how Aaron and his two sons could perform so extensive a service.

Mother. They would have been wholly unable. The *Levites*, a numerous body of inferior priests, assisted them. The first-born male of every family in Israel was required for the duties of the sanctuary, in grateful acknowledgement of that mercy which had spared them, when the heir of every house in Egypt expired. But this claim was commuted by the substitution of the whole tribe of Levi, to which Moses and Aaron also belonged.

Fanny. You spoke just now of an *ecclesiastical* year—pray what did you mean by that term?

Mother. In the organization of the Jewish Theocracy, two sorts of years were used. A civil or solar year, which began and ended at the autumnal equinox; and a religious or ecclesiastical year, denominated also “the year of new things,” commencing with the vernal equinox—because that was the season in which they departed from Egypt, and became an independent people.

Charles. My dear mother, you have again used a term as new to my sisters, perhaps, as, I confess, it is to me. What is Theocracy?

Mother. A little recollection would enable you to answer yourself; as the word is derived from the Greek language, which you are now studying. A *Theocracy* is a form of government of which *God* is himself the *Legislator*.

But this whole system—the scanty outline of which I have given you, so costly, so burdensome, was but the shadow of a substance, “the scaffolding to the building,” to be wholly abolished when that should be erected.

Fanny. Did the people who lived under the Mosaic dispensation consider it in that light?

Mother. They did certainly look beyond the emblems exhibited to their senses, for something more substantial. Every hour beheld their infractions of the moral law—the perfect and imperishable rule of their obedience,—the frequent repetition of their expiatory sacrifices, would teach them that their guilt and pollution still remained—and we find a writer of their own nation appealing to their common understanding against the possibility of a remission of sin by the blood of an animal.* Yet we cannot suppose them to have discerned the way of salvation with the clearness and certainty afforded to us, who have seen the accomplishment of prophecy—and the verification of signs—in Jesus Christ, the glorious antitype—the one, only, and efficient, expiation of our offences.

* Hebrews, x. 4.

NUMBERS.

Mother. No longer compelled to encounter the terrible ensigns of *justice* on the burning summit of Sinai, the will of the Sovereign Disposer was now declared to Moses from the seat of *Mercy*. Thence he was commanded, in the second month of the second year after they had come out of Egypt, to *number* the children of Israel; or, as we should now say, to make a census of the population. Accordingly, upon an enumeration of every male of twenty years old and upwards, the result was found to be "six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men, able to go to war," excluding the Levites. That tribe, being wholly devoted to the service of the altar, instead of the first-born of every house, was reckoned from one month old and upward, and the amount was twenty-two thousand. The sum of the first-born then being taken, exceeded the number of the Levites by two hundred and seventy-three. An equivalent in money was accepted for this excess, and the price of their redemption was paid into the sacred treasury. The Levites were not to be admitted into the ministry under thirty years of age; nor was their service protracted beyond that of fifty.

In the beginning of this second year, on its appointed anniversary, the passover was regularly celebrated; and on the twentieth day of the second month, the bright cloud, the signal of their movements, was taken up from the tabernacle; the silver trumpets were sounded, and the congregation proceeded on their journey. The tabernacle, and all its appurtenances, borne in order by the Levites, went first, and the tribes, in their respective ranks, preceded each by his appropriate standard, followed. Three days they pursued the path of their heavenly guide, and in the wilderness of Paran, obeying its silent mandate, they again encamped. (B. C. 1489.)

At this station, near a place called Kadesh-Barnea, they remained a considerable time, and occasioned great trouble

to Moses by their turbulent conduct, which seems to have been originally excited by the strangers, "a mixed multitude," who had followed them out of Egypt.

Fanny. I am surprised to hear of *strangers* in the camp of Israel—I thought the rigid law of Moses excluded all such from their community.

Mother. Very different, indeed, was the benevolent system of the Hebrew legislator. Not one of his laws bears an inhospitable aspect; on the contrary, a variety of provisions ensured kindness and justice to the stranger who should either live in their cities or become proselytes to their religion.—"Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger—nor of the fatherless—nor take the widow's raiment to pledge. When thou cuttest down thy harvest, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it—when thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward—it shall be for the *stranger*, for the fatherless, and the widow,"—was the compassionate language in which they were commanded to consider the stranger as one of themselves; and we hear Moses affectionately entreating his brother-in-law, Hobab, when he visited him at Kadesh, to remain with them, to aid them in their journey through a country with which he was acquainted; assuring him, that he should partake liberally of the good things they were going to receive;—though the *chosen* people were at the same time enjoined to beware of imitating their impure manners or worship. But the propensity to this crime, which they had very naturally contracted in Egypt, betrayed them often into serious calamities. The aliens who had been induced, by seeing the stupendous power of their God, to unite their lot with that of the Hebrews, had promised themselves the immediate enjoyment of a land "flowing with milk and honey." Disappointed in this expectation, they repented of their hasty emigration, complained of their privations, and instigated the ungrateful Israelites—though daily fed by a visible miracle—to loathe their heavenly bread, and look back with regret to the flesh and herbs of Egypt—the scanty wages of their miserable servitude! "We remember," they exclaimed,

while they wept at the doors of their tents, "we remember, the fish and the cucumbers, and the melons, of which we ate freely; but now our soul is dried away, for there is nothing besides this manna before our eyes!"

"Wherefore," cried their afflicted chief, to the Hearer of Prayer, "hast thou laid the burden of all this people upon me. I am not able to bear it alone. Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?" "Kill me, I pray thee—let me not see my wretchedness." In answer to his complaint seventy elders were graciously added to the magistracy, and imbued with the spirit of wisdom, to assist him in the management of his restless community; and quails were again sent in abundance to gratify their longing for flesh; but, with the gratification, came the punishment. Whilst they yet feasted with thoughtless avidity, the plague broke out amongst them, and swept off great numbers of the offending people!

From the bosom of his own family, where, if anywhere, Moses might have looked for harmony and support, he was next distracted by dissention and humbled by resistance. Zipporah, his wife, had given some umbrage to his brother and sister; and he, perhaps, supposed it became him to interpose his good offices; but his mediation was entirely rejected, and he himself even accused of presumptuously laying claim to an exclusive degree of inspiration, not alike imparted to them. To silence forever such ambitious pretensions, they were reprov'd by an awful voice from *the Cloud*, descending to the door of the tabernacle—"Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" inquired the Great Supreme. "To other prophets will I make myself known in visions and dreams, but to him will I speak mouth to mouth." And the deluded Miriam was additionally punished by disease—she became leprous, and was banished seven days from the society of her brethren.

Fanny. What could possibly be meant by that mysterious expression—"With him will I speak mouth to mouth?"

Mother. The mystery lies alone in the expression—the meaning is plainly, to vindicate the disputed authority

of Moses, by reminding the perverse people of that immediate communion with Deity to which this most favoured servant was admitted. Other prophets, He told them, would be instructed "in dreams and visions"—but to Moses, He would speak by a *Voice*—as the original words import, in conformity with our ideas of the most clear and intimate mode of intercourse. But the spirit of sedition had got into the camp, and refused to submit even to the Voice of the Sovereign. A more violent and extensive opposition to his legate soon after appeared;—Korah, one of the Levites, Dathan and Abiram, with two hundred and fifty other chiefs of the assembly, inflated with the high destiny to which, as a nation, they were called, yet envious of the transcendent preference bestowed on the two brothers, indignantly exclaimed, "The whole congregation are holy—ye take too much upon you, Moses and Aaron." "Ye have brought us up to kill us in this wilderness, and hast not given us an inheritance in fields and vineyards." "Hear, I pray you," returned the meekest of men, "ye sons of Levi! Seemeth it but a small thing to you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation, to bring you near to him, to do the service of the tabernacle, and seek ye the priesthood also?" "Bring your censers all of you prepared with fire and with incense, to-morrow, and let Aaron bring also his censer—and the Lord will show whom He hath chosen."—But Dathan and Abiram not only refused to obey his summons to come and answer for their conduct, but vilified him to his messengers, reiterating the outrageous accusation, "Thou hast brought us up to kill us in this wilderness, and wilt thou altogether make thyself a prince over us?" Not at all intimidated, however, by the ominous offer of Moses to try their pretensions, the next morning the whole company of mutineers appeared at the door of the Tabernacle with incense and censers in their unhallowed hands. To the command to separate himself and Aaron from this perverse nation, that they might be consumed in a moment, their compassionate leader again interposed his supplications, that the innocent might not be involved with the guilty. "Depart," said he, to the

assembled congregation, "from the tents of these wicked men, and if they die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a *new* thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, then ye shall understand that they have provoked the Lord; and hereby ye shall know that he hath sent me to do these works." Scarcely had he ceased to speak, when the earth indeed opened, and of all those that had mutinied against Moses and Aaron, some fell down alive into the pit, and the rest were instantly consumed by fire! The censers which Korah and his adherents had profaned, were converted into broad plates, and fixed permanently on the altar—a warning to all who should dare to invade the sacred province of Aaron and his family. Not yet admonished, but rather irritated by the chastening that should have subdued them, other undaunted spirits now cried against Moses and Aaron, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord!"—Again they were threatened with instant extermination, and the plague broke out and made dreadful ravages in the camp. Fourteen thousand seven hundred became its victims, before Aaron could arrest its progress and obtain a remission of the penalty for their aggravated offences, by making a ceremonial atonement, in the manner prescribed by their humane legislator. To reduce, if possible, these aspiring pretensions, and settle the momentous question so daringly pursued, yet another confirmation was condescendingly given. At the command of Moses, twelve rods or twigs of the almond tree, one for each tribe of the house of Israel, were brought by their princes, and laid up in the tabernacle; and on the morrow, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi—and his alone—was found to have "budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds!" After this beautiful emblem of the divine appropriation of the tribe of Levi, and pre-eminently of the family of Aaron, had been displayed to the wondering congregation, and produced, at least, a momentary conviction of their guilt, it was laid up for a memorial "beside the ark of the Covenant."

Thus did this inconsiderate nation go on, incurring and suffering the penalty of disobedience—repenting and re-

turning again to their folly—till one act, pre-eminent in ingratitude, filled up the measure of their provocations, and excluded them forever from the promised inheritance.

Catherine. Excluded forever! Could that be without implicating the veracity of the Deity?—Had he not promised?—I ask the question, I assure you, with diffidence.

Mother. You do right to inquire when you do not fully comprehend my meaning; and especially every suspicion of the nature you now intimate, should be cleared up. Every act of the Deity can be vindicated; and no one with more certainty than that of the excision of the rebellious Israelites. The inheritance was promised to the *posterity* of Abraham, not to individuals; and the generation we are accompanying through their probation, paid the just forfeit of their own infidelity.

At Kadesh-barnea they were in the neighbourhood of the Amorites, a branch of the family of Canaan, on whom the malediction had passed, and the Israelites were commanded to ascend the mountains and dispossess them. But having heard that this district was inhabited by men of gigantic stature and strength, they proposed that a few men might first be despatched privately, to examine the resources of their adversaries and the quality of their soil. This request, apparently so reasonable, was acceded to, and twelve persons, all rulers of tribes, were commissioned to make a careful survey of the country. After forty days' absence they returned, bringing with them specimens of its fruits, figs and pomegranates, and grapes of an extraordinary size, and acknowledged that they had, indeed, beheld a country of superior excellence, but "the cities," they said, "were walled, and the people were tall, and some places were even inhabited by giants, the sons of Anak, the giant!"—so that their hearts failed, and they saw nothing but defeat and disgrace in the projected enterprise. Caleb and Joshua, two of the deputies, men of faith and fortitude, interrupted this discouraging harangue, by entreating, eagerly, that they might go up at once, and drive out these formidable natives—mere spectres of the imagination to them—who would be led on by Him who was able to conquer! But this pious recollection, which

should have unfurled the banners of hope and joy, availed them nothing! The terrified messengers had spread dismay throughout the camp, and they were ready to put Caleb and Joshua to death. "Would to God," said they, "we had died in the wilderness. We are brought here, our wives and our children, to fall by the sword of the Canaanites;—rather let us make us a captain, and return into Egypt."

Catherine. Surely, mother, nothing less than the word of inspiration could persuade us, that this people could thus seriously withdraw their confidence from a Power so magnificently, so unceasingly displayed in their preservation.

Mother. Self-love, my daughter, believe me, suggests your indignant doubt. The same power preserves us; the same beneficence bestows our daily bread; and if we forget our obligations, surrounded as we are by all the comforts of social life, shall we question the existence of unbelief in the poor Israelites, detained in a barren desert? Yet let us not think lightly of their glaring derelictions. They had seen the Egyptians severely afflicted, and themselves exempted—they had seen the rolling waves divided to make a path for them, and the pursuing host of Pharaoh overwhelmed—they had been sheltered from the sun by day, and guided by a supernatural light by night—bread had fallen from heaven into their hands, and water had burst from the rock for them; yet they refused to believe that the same Almighty arm would carry them through!—Disinheritance, and extirpation, had often been threatened, and promises and repentance had hitherto found mercy—but now the dread decree sounded terribly in their ears*—"Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice—surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers; your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness—all that were numbered of you from twenty years old and upwards, which have murmured against me. But Caleb, the

* Numbers, xiv, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31.

son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun, and your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land ye have despised. Your children shall wander in this wilderness forty years—after the number of the days that ye searched the land, each day for a year. But as for you—turn ye, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.” This sentence filled them with consternation, and they came weeping and confessing their sins to their governor, and professing their readiness to attack the mountains of the Amorites; but their day of grace was gone, and Moses discouraged them from the vain attempt. Yet trusting in the lenity they had so often experienced, they presumptuously persisted, although neither led by Moses nor the ark of the Covenant, which always went with them to battle, and were deservedly defeated; while the timid spies, who had been chiefly instrumental in the sad catastrophe, were all cut off by the plague.

The occurrences I have been relating, took place at a very early period of the migration of the Israelites. Time and correction had somewhat allayed their restless temper; and thirty-seven years had wasted away and swept off many of the principal offenders—when, encompassing the highlands of mount Seir, they found themselves bereft of the refreshing stream, which, like their tutelary cloud, had accompanied their devious way. Again the smothered flame of rebellion burst out—again they returned to their former accusation against Moses and Aaron—“Ye have brought us to die in this wilderness!” The wisdom that had determined to make that people the monuments of His long-suffering mercy, again directed Moses to take Aaron, and, with his rod in his hand, to *speak* to the rock at Meribah, and, at his *word*, water should flow in the presence of the whole congregation.

Several scriptures concur in bestowing on Moses the appellation of *the meekest of men*. With unwearied patience he had firmly conducted his administration till this fatal moment, when he suffered one unhappy doubt to interrupt his duty. The Great Supreme had, perhaps, imparted to his miraculous rod an influence which he would

fail to extend to his word; and instead of speaking to the rock* as he had been commanded to do, he raised his arm and smote it twice! Water, indeed, flowed abundantly at the stroke; but his disobedience, and that of his brother, who had participated in his crime, brought upon them the sentence which had been before pronounced upon the rebellious congregation—exclusion from the promised land!

In the first month of the fortieth year, they came, after seventeen encampments, to the wilderness of Zin, in the vicinity of the Edomites.

Charles. I think you told us, mother, that mount Seir, the dwelling of Esau, was also called Edom.

Mother. I did. And because it was the possession of their brethren, the Israelites were not suffered to invade it, nor do them any injury. But the most convenient way to their place of destination being through that country, they sent a respectful request to the Edomites, that they might pass by the king's high-way, not touching their fields or vineyards, or even drinking of their wells, without compensation.

Charles. Not drink of their wells!—surely, water is cheap—Who would refuse water to a traveller?

Mother. Very cheap to us. In our favoured climate, all the luxuries of nature abound; but in the deserts of Arabia, a well is a treasure: and, perhaps, being rare, they contain so little water, that the supply of an army, and a multitude of cattle, might occasion great distress to the inhabitants. In the days of Abraham and Isaac, we know that wells of water were objects of strife between the herdsmen. Yet it seemed not likely that the Edomites would refuse the refreshment of water, and the use of the high-way to a nation descended from the same stock with themselves. They did, however, refuse; and the weary travellers were obliged to reach mount Hor, on the opposite border of the king of Edom's dominions, by a circuitous road. At mount Hor, Aaron died; and Eleazer, his

* The rock of Meribah of mount Sinai, is still seen, bearing the evident marks of a supernatural event. The holes and the channels of the miraculous stream are its indelible inscription.—See Shaw's Travels.

son, was arrayed in the holy garments, and anointed in his stead. At Kadesh they had buried Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. She is called a prophetess.

After thirty days of mourning for their venerable high priest, the Israelites prosecuted their journey; but vexed and retarded, by the contiguous princes, when they imagined themselves almost on the threshold of the land of promise—the reward of their sufferings;—although, after their defeat by the Amorites, successful in every contest, they once more relapsed into impatience, “and spoke against God, and against Moses.” Once more they were chastised—a species of venomous reptile, by the historian called “fiery serpents,” was sent among them, and many died of the sting which was inflicted.

Fanny. Mother, I cannot pardon this incorrigible people, so often forgiven, yet still offending—I am quite wearied of their obstinacy!

Mother. I am sensible, my dear, that the frequent recurrence of similar incidents is not calculated to entertain you; but a few instances of the criminal distrust of the Israelites, were necessary to vindicate to you the justice of that decree which had gone out against them. The remedy applied to their disease, in this last case, was especially designed to remind them, that neither the prayers of Moses, nor the sacrifice of their hands, were efficient. In answer to their repentant entreaty, “we have sinned—pray unto the Lord for us!”—their intercessor was commanded to erect a serpent of brass, that those who were bitten might *look on it* with AN EYE OF FAITH and live!

Catherine. If this method of cure had been the invention of Moses, we should say that it savoured of the magic of the Egyptians.

Mother. But we are happily saved from the irreverent suspicion, and sanctioned in our application of the figure, by the highest authority, even that of the antitype himself—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of Man be lifted up.”*

* John, iii.

The comparative ease and indolence in which the Israelites had passed so many years, was now to be relinquished for exertion and warfare. The princes, whose territories lay on the east of Canaan, could not see, without inquietude, the approach of a numerous people of whom they had heard wonderful things. Two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, came out with their armies and attacked them; but they were completely vanquished, and their countries occupied by the victorious Israelites. Og is called the last of a race of giants, who, in earlier times, had inhabited the adjacent mountain. Such was his extraordinary size, that his bedstead of iron, nine cubits in length, and four cubits in breadth,* was laid up in the city of Rabbah as a curiosity. From him they captured "three-score walled cities, besides unwalled towns a great many;" a circumstance which gives us some idea of the populousness and strength of the countries through which the Israelites had to pass.

From the defeat of the giant at a place called Edrei, the conquerors pursued their march and encamped in the plains of Moab. The Moabites were descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham, and on that account were to be respected. But the prowess of Israel had spread universal terror, and the Moabites, disregarding the peaceable disposition manifested in their favour, determined to oppose their progress. Yet seeing that Sihon and Og had been as nothing in their hands, they did not dare to attack them openly. In conjunction, therefore, with the Midianites, they adopted the more efficient scheme, as they imagined, of destroying them by the mysterious influence of their incantations.

Charles. This was what the ancient heathens called *devoting* their enemies, before they went to battle.

Mother. For that purpose they sent messengers, men of considerable rank in their states, with presents in their hands, to invite Balaam, a magician, or soothsayer, from Peor, a city of Mesopotamia, to come and curse the inva-

* Thirteen and a half feet in length, and six feet in breadth, English measure.—*Burder.*

ders. Though Balaam was a heathen, he had some knowledge of the true God, and affected to suspend his determination, until he should consult "the Lord." The next morning he informed the deputies that "the Lord" had refused to let him go with them; and with this answer they returned to Moab.

A second embassy of princes, yet more honourable than the first, was despatched to the soothsayer, to beseech him to come, promising him wealth and dignity if he would curse this people. Finally, his avarice prevailing over his scruples, he went. On the way, as he passed through a narrow road enclosed by walls on either side, the ass, on which he rode, suddenly stood still.—Surprised and provoked, he urged her with blows to go on—but she persisted in refusing. At length she opened her mouth and spoke:—am not I thine ass on which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day; was I ever wont to do so unto thee?" At that moment the eyes of the prophet were opened, and he saw "the angel of the Lord," standing in the way.—"Wherefore," demanded the celestial messenger, "hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?—Behold *I* went out to meet thee, because thy way is perverse before me."—Balaam, confounded by this unexpected rebuke, acknowledged his guilt, and professed his readiness to return to his own city. But he was now permitted to proceed, and enjoined to say only that which should be revealed to him.

At the river Arnon, the border of Moab, they were welcomed by Balak, the king; who immediately conducted the enchanter to an elevated situation, that he might behold the multitudes of Israel. Uncertain what he might be compelled to say, yet desirous to obtain the promised rewards, he required altars to be built, and propitiatory sacrifices to be offered, which was done three several times, the kings and princes attending. Each time, instead of the curses required, Balaam pronounced only blessings; and Balak, at last, exasperated by repeated disappointments, returned hopeless to his capital.

Catherine. Did these heathens offer sacrifices to the true God?

Mother. It is generally believed that Balaam worshipped the true God, but was the slave of avarice. The king led him from place to place, putting confidence in Balaam's God; saying—"Come, I pray thee, I will show thee another place; peradventure it will *please 'the Lord,'* that thou mayest curse me from thence;"—and Balaam's answer discovered his own impotence.—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of *the Lord*, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what he saith, that will I speak." But, although their design was really to propitiate Jehovah, their worship was so mingled with their own superstitions, that it was not accepted; for it is added, after they had built altars, and offered burnt-offerings three times—"when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to *seek for enchantments*;" but proceeded to pronounce the sublime prophecy, which you will find in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Numbers. It is a beautiful specimen of the eastern style of composition; full of lofty metaphors, and, perhaps, but indistinctly comprehended by the speaker.

Fanny. Do you suppose, mother, that Balaam did not understand what he himself pronounced?

Mother. There is reason to believe that the prophecies delivered by the most pious men, were not always fully understood by themselves; and it is not likely that an unrighteous prophet, but indifferently acquainted with the true God, would be more highly favoured.

Fanny. Why then should we put any faith in the prophecy of such a man as Balaam, a soothsayer, an enchanter?

Mother. The people concerning whom the predictions were delivered, might safely receive them, for Moses informed them "the spirit of God came upon him," and we have the additional evidence of having seen them accomplished. Take, for instance, these words: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, *the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*"—"Who can count the dust of Jacob,

and the number of the fourth part of Israel?"—"I shall see him but not now—I shall behold him but not nigh:—there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel."*—"And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said—Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be, *that he perish forever.*"

These particulars, with several others predicted by Balaam, are obviously fulfilled. The people of Israel have been, and still are, a very numerous nation—they dwell *alone*, that is, they are as completely distinct from all other people at this day, as they were when they entered the land of Canaan. Even under the monarchs by whom they were subdued in later times, they always maintained a subordinate government, by their own peculiar laws.—They have never been "reckoned among the nations." "*A Star* has risen out of Jacob, and a sceptre from Israel." And the Amalekites, although in the days of Moses they were "the first of nations," have perished forever—not a trace of them can be found on the face of the whole earth.

Altogether disappointed in his hope of obtaining the silver and gold of king Balak, by the arts of magic, the cunning magician now invented another stratagem to ruin the thoughtless travellers. He persuaded the Midianites to invite them to assist at the festive rites of their impious religion:—they fell into the snare—they ate of their sacrifices, and did homage to their deities!

Idolatry had always been punished; but at this critical juncture, on the eve of their entrance into a country entirely abandoned to such stupid practices, it was particularly necessary to mark it with signal abhorrence. Accordingly, twenty-four thousand of the principal offenders were cut off; and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, was rewarded for his pious resolution in executing the painful duty of putting to death, with his own hand, a prince of the house of Simeon, who was pre-eminently guilty, with a promise of the continuance of the priesthood in his family.

* A star, in the Egyptian hieroglyphics, denoted a deity—in the prophetic writings, a star and a sceptre denoted a prince or ruler.

But the Midianites, who, had they kept quiet, might have possessed their country in security, were not with impunity to bring these evils on the unoffending Israelites.—Twelve thousand men, with Phinehas, and the ark of the covenant, were sent against them:—they were conquered—their cities were destroyed, and an immense spoil, in cattle, and goods of various sorts, was taken. Five kings, and Balaam their counsellor, paid the price of their folly, in the loss of their lives in the battle. The spoil was divided between the victors and those who remained in the camp. A tribute from each went into the treasury; to which was added, an offering of gratitude, from the officers who went on the expedition; when they found, upon examining their troops, that not one had perished!

While these contemptible efforts to frustrate the designs of Providence were in operation, the persevering leader of the Israelites, and Eleazar their priest, were preparing to pass the Jordan, the natural barrier between the plains of Moab and the land of promise.

Another census of the male population was taken, and found not to contain the name of one individual who had been numbered in the wilderness of Sinai, save only Caleb and Joshua, the faithful messengers. The sentence the ungrateful congregation had brought upon themselves was now completely executed;—they had fallen by disease, by the sword, and by fire; and Moses alone, their venerable chief, remained, of all that were involved in it!—He, too, must soon be removed by death—and Joshua, a man of pre-eminent qualifications, was now pointed out as the captain who should succeed him.

Catherine. Pointed out by whom?—By Moses? or was he elected by the people?

Mother. By neither. Very few things connected with the government of the Hebrews, either civil or religious, originated with themselves. All was the work of the Deity; and by him communicated immediately to Moses; who, notwithstanding he is called the *legislator*, was but the organ of the real Sovereign.

Moses might institute inferior regulations for present expedience, and select inferior magistrates to assist him;

but every permanent precept was promulgated with the imperative preface ; "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying." Every important designation was "according to the word of the Lord,"—an idea so awful, so commanding, that we cannot withhold our respect from those who still *sincerely* adhere to them, and cannot believe with us, that the greater part are abolished.

Moses had been summoned by "a voice from the burning bush" at the foot of mount Horeb ; and the same voice proceeding now from the "Seat of Mercy," commanded him to lay his hands on Joshua, and consecrate him in the sight of the whole assembly ; and a gracious promise was added, that "a part of the Spirit that had rested on Moses should animate and direct his successor."

Fanny. As Moses and Joshua were directed in their whole conduct, step by step, I do not very well see why they should have been enlightened in any unusual degree.

Mother. Although the very letter of the law was dictated to Moses, yet he had much need of an enlightened understanding in the management of his community. But it was the heart also, as well as the intellect, that was improved by Divine Grace ; and no man was ever more imperiously required to "keep his heart with all diligence," than was this tried servant. You see, with all the aid he received, in one instance the weakness of his nature prevailed. The people whose turbulent temper had overcame the weakness of Moses, were indeed dead ; but their children inherited their character, and would demand of Joshua the continual exercise of resolution and constancy, of patience and integrity.

He was to be honoured in the performance of miracles as his predecessor had been. He was to drive out nations superior in numbers and strength, to dispossess them of their fields and fortified cities, and re-people them with his brethren.

Joshua was to divide the land of Canaan equally amongst them, giving to the larger tribes the greater portion, and to the smaller the less. Their relative location by tribes was to be determined by lot ; those only of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh excepted. These

last, having more numerous flocks than the others, requested of Moses the country taken from Og, and Sihon, because the grassy plain on the margin of the river, seemed peculiarly adapted to cattle.

Their suit was at first received by Moses with much displeasure.—Supposing it to be their intention to remain in security, while their brethren encountered the populous nations beyond the Jordan, he accused them of want of faith—of discouraging their brethren by their timidity, as their fathers had done at Kadesh, and thereby excluded themselves from the promised rest.

But Reuben and Gad disclaimed the selfish design—they would, they said, build folds for their cattle, and leave their wives and children in the conquered cities, while themselves would go over armed with their brethren, and quit them not until they had obtained peaceable possession of their inheritance. To this condition Moses assented, and the two tribes, and half the tribe of Manasseh, were settled in the land of Gilead, from Mount Hermon on the north, to the river Arnon, the border of Moab, on the south.

Fanny. To live in cities, and pasture great multitudes of cattle, which it is evident the Israelites must have done, were it only for their sacrifices, is irreconcilable with our notions of things; it was certainly very inconvenient.

Mother. You are not to imagine the cities of the Israelites, either here or on the other side of the river, were large and confined like ours. They were villages rather, although they had walls, surrounded by their land both for pasture and tillage. They went into the fields to their occupations in the day time, and returned into the city at night. Their simple habits required but few of the arts, and in those days perhaps they had no artisans by profession. They were all husbandmen, rich only, or chiefly, in flocks and herds, and in the productions of the earth.

In the enumeration made by Moses and Joshua, a chasm appeared in the family of Hephher, and tribe of Joseph. Zelophehad, his son, had died in the wilderness, leaving no male heir to receive his portion, and transmit his name. But five females, his daughters, appeared be-

fore the rulers, petitioning for the right of inheritance. "Why," said they, "should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son?" He had not deserved this disgrace, they affectionately argued; he had not leagued with the companies that had been cut off in the guilt of rebellion, but had "died in his own sin." "Give us therefore," said they, "a portion among our brethren." Their case was brought before the divine Oracle, and became the occasion of a permanent statute, for the distribution of property in Israel. "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right—thou shalt surely give them an inheritance among their father's brethren. If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him, of his family; and he shall possess it, and it shall be unto the children of Israel, a statute of judgment."*

Catherine. Is not this precisely our own law?

Mother. Yes, and you will find that the judicial, as well as the moral code of all civilized nations, as far as circumstances allow, are borrowed from scripture—the plentiful fountain of justice and wisdom. But the pride of man is ever polluting the streams. The chiefs of the house of Joseph objected, that this regulation might operate to the prejudice of their tribe, inasmuch as the possessions of the daughters of Zelophehad, would go with them to the tribe into which they should marry—destroying thereby the contemplated equality of the nation. To prevent this consequence, it was provided, that a female possessing an inheritance, should not marry out of her own tribe—and these heiresses were therefore united to their kinsmen.

The tribe of Levi, deriving their chief support from the sacred treasury, were to have no landed property—

* Numbers, xxvii, 8, 9, 10, 11.

but forty-eight cities, taken from the other tribes, and in proportion to the extent of each, were to be allotted for their dwellings, with suburbs, or pasture grounds for their cattle.*

Six of the forty-eight, to be "cities of refuge," for the involuntary homicide, to which he might flee and receive protection, from the vengeance of the friends of him whom he had slain. This immunity continued, during the life of the officiating high priest: and after his decease, the offender might return securely to his home. But should he be found beyond the limits of the city, and fall into the hands of those who sought his life, within that period, they were not accountable for any punishment which they might inflict. For a deliberate, premeditated murder, no satisfaction might be taken. Of this most atrocious of all crimes, the utmost abhorrence is unequivocally expressed, in these emphatic words:—"Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are—for blood defileth the land, *and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by blood.*"†

Fanny. To confine a man to one place, and at a distance from his family and friends, perhaps, as it might happen, for a number of years, would seem rather to be a punishment, than a favour—considering too, that the homicide was involuntary.

Mother. When the life of a man is taken away by accidental violence, the fact will frequently be attended with circumstances exciting suspicion in the minds of those most nearly interested; and instigating them to revenge. The city of Refuge was then an asylum for him who might unhappily become the object of vindictive or unreasonable passion. Besides, life under any circumstances is a valuable treasure, because it is the season for repentance, and preparation for a longer and a better state of existence. To be, therefore, even the innocent cause of

* About 305 acres surrounding each city.—See *Scot's Tables*.

† Numbers, xxxv. 31, 33.

depriving a fellow-creature of this invaluable opportunity, must fill a reflecting mind with the most poignant regret, and has been in many instances, the means of bringing sinners to contrition. Seclusion for a time, from the objects that had most fondly occupied the heart, was well adapted to promote this most important end, and was indeed a blessing though it might at first seem a punishment.

Fanny. But would it not have been better, that the suspected reputation should have been cleared up, as it is done with us, in the trial by jury, than that it should have remained under a cloud forever—whilst sympathy and safety were only procured by the death of the High Priest—a circumstance altogether unconnected with the guilt or innocence of the offender?

Mother. The trial by jury, my dear, is an admirable institution for us, whose circumstances are altogether different from those of the Israelites. Nor were they the subjects of arbitrary power—they had their courts and their witnesses, and guilt or innocence was ascertained with caution; but their judicial and typical laws, were sometimes blended together,—of which peculiarity, the city of Refuge is an instance. The allusions to it in Scripture, both under the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation, instruct us that it was intended to teach them, that their most indifferent actions were not innocent—that they were continually obnoxious to punishment, and that pardon and salvation were to be obtained only through the merits of the *life and death* of their promised Messiah, our exalted *High Priest*.

DEUTERONOMY.

Charles. My impatience, Mother, to pursue the history of the Israelites has led me to anticipate our conversation. I have looked into the book of Deuteronomy, but have met with nothing that you had not told us before.

Mother. I am very much gratified in finding that you have attended so carefully, for your conclusion is nearly correct. The book of Deuteronomy is a book of repetition, and that is the import of the name.* It is the valedictory discourse of Moses to the Israelites.

Their pilgrimage was now drawing to a close, and the life of their venerable legislator was restricted to that period. He had earnestly desired to enter the promised land, but his prayer was rejected, and he submitted.

The near approach of their separation awakened all his paternal love for the people of his charge—his anxious concern for their happiness, and his apprehensions of the disastrous consequences of that levity which had severely put his constancy to the test—and finally, occasioned his exclusion.

The generation that was now to enjoy the blessings promised to Abraham, had not incurred the unpardonable guilt of despising “the voice that spake from the mountain that burned with fire unto the midst of heaven”—the tremendous spectacle displayed on mount Sinai; they were “the children—the little ones” whom those incorrigible men had often complained were brought out of Egypt to die of hunger and thirst. The precepts and the prayers of Moses had failed to avert the penalty of disobedience from their fathers; yet flattered by his own invincible affection, he indulged the hope, that the last words of a long tried, and now departing friend, might stimulate their children to pursue that course of virtue and piety, which

* From the Greek words *Deuteros*, the second, and *Nomos*, a law.

alone would secure their peace in the inheritance of Abraham.

He assembled the nation, therefore, on the plain of Moab, on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year of their abode in the desert, and delivered to them the persuasive address contained in the book of Deuteronomy.

And first, because the most of his auditors were either very young, or not yet born when the posterity of Jacob had walked through the dried bed of the Red Sea, he recited briefly their journey from Horeb "through the great and terrible wilderness, by the way of the mountains of the Amorites," to the place where they then stood—the unceasing care of an ever-watchful guardian, who had provided for all their wants; and travelling before them in a fire by night, and a cloud by day, had directed them where to pitch their tents—who had enabled them to overcome all opposition, and delivered their enemies into their hands—yet they had not put their trust in Him—even refusing at Kadesh, when they were told to go up at once and possess their inheritance!

Charles. But the people to whom Moses now spoke, were not the fearful men who refused—why then did he accuse them so harshly?

Mother. They were not in the first instance, but as they grew into manhood, they had sufficiently manifested the same culpable dispositions, to justify Moses in warning them both from the example of their fathers, and their own aberrations. He might remind them, that they had themselves been encompassed by the mercies of the "mighty one of Israel"—"they had been fed without bread, and their raiment had not grown old by the way." But he had yet another and equally decisive plea. "The Lord," said he, "made not this covenant in Horeb with our fathers, but with us—even us, who are all of us alive this day. Hear, therefore, O Israel, the statutes and the judgments which I speak in your ears this day—that ye may learn them and do them, that it may be well with you. The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love him, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. These words shall be in thine heart, and thou

shalt teach them diligently unto thy children—and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Thus solemnly and earnestly did Moses demand the serious attention of the Israelites, while he proceeded to rehearse the principal laws, and added others, both moral and judicial; explaining and enforcing all, as his fervent zeal dictated, by every consideration of their own utter unworthiness, by the peculiar nature of the obligations they were under,—and by the free sovereign goodness of God; who had not “set his love upon them because they were more in number, for they were the fewest of all people:” nor for their righteousness had he chosen them, “for they were a rebellious and obstinate people.” He bade them, therefore, take heed, when they possessed houses full of good things, which they filled not, and wells, which they digged not, and vineyards and olives, which they planted not—that they did not forget the Lord who brought them out of the house of bondage, and say, “by my might and my power have I gotten this wealth.” To promote this modest temper, peculiarly becoming in a people so greatly distinguished, he commanded them, when they should have peaceable possession of their inheritance, and came with the first fruits of the earth annually, that they should confess, while they put their offering into the hands of the priests—“A Syrian, ready to perish, was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty and populous—and the Egyptians afflicted us, and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, he looked upon our affliction and brought us forth with a mighty hand, and with signs and wonders.” Such transporting recollections crowding into the mind of the grateful chieftain, he exclaims—“For ask now of the days that are past, since the day that God created man upon the earth, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it.”—“Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, and live?” “Or hath God essayed to go and take him a nation from amidst another nation, by temptations, by a mighty hand, and by great terrors; according to all that the Lord your God

did for you in Egypt before your eyes? And now Israel," he asks, "what is the reasonable service the Lord requires of thee, but to fear him, to walk in all his ways, to love him with all thy soul, to keep his commandments and statutes, for thy good? For the Lord your God, is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. Love *ye*, therefore, the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and *swear by his name.*"

Charles. I am sorry to interrupt you, mother, but pray, why such an injunction—to *swear by his name*?

Mother. That is, when it should be necessary to make an oath, they should swear only by his name, and offer no sort of homage to the idols of the Canaanites. If they had often indicated a propensity to this atrocious crime, in their insulated situation in their wilderness, and notwithstanding their singular consecration to Jehovah, it became imperatively necessary to admonish them of the dangers to which they were about to be exposed in an idolatrous country. They were therefore commanded to remove every object that might tempt them from their duty. To destroy, utterly, every place where the heathens had worshipped, to cut down their sacred groves, to burn their images, and their pictures, and reject and detest the gold and the silver with which they were adorned; ever remembering, that when they *heard the voice* of their Sovereign, they "saw no similitude" of any object, either terrestrial or celestial—that no imposing appearances, not even the sun and moon, and the stars, the most splendid phenomena in the universe, might entice them to imitate the heathens, and corrupt the worship of the invisible Deity. And because an intercourse with them could not be maintained with innocence, for they had already given deplorable evidence of the fatal facility with which they might be assailed, they were commanded to make no treaty of friendship—no covenant—and especially, no marriages, with the nations of Canaan—but utterly to exterminate them.

Charles. Was not that a cruel command?

Mother. A severe one, no doubt, with respect to the Israelites, who, having no personal quarrel with the inhabitants of Canaan, must have reluctantly obeyed; but many of our duties are repugnant to our natural feelings. The Great Supreme, however, although he has a right to implicit compliance, is pleased to conciliate our reason. "Not for their own righteousness," he told the Israelites, "were they to inherit a delightful land, but for their abominable wickedness, the natives were to be dispossessed. Their morals were as detestable as their religion was corrupt, and this punishment he might as rightfully inflict by one instrument as by another: by famine or the sword—by earthquakes or pestilence—as his wisdom might determine.

All the people comprehended under the general name of Canaanites, were not equally obnoxious to the divine malediction. Some nations were to be spared on condition of submission to the conquerors, and the payment of tribute, but in case of resistance, to be partially punished by the slaughter of the men; while the women and children were to be saved alive.

Yet in condescension to their weakness, their gracious Sovereign persuaded them to the discharge of their duty by motives addressed to the most powerful feelings of human nature—their interest. The land to which they were hastening was contrasted with that from which they had escaped—not parched, like that where they had "sowed their seeds and reared them with labour, but watered with the rains of Heaven,"—a variegated landscape of valleys and hills—of brooks and fountains—of trees and minerals. And they were encouraged to attack without fear, a people stronger and more numerous than themselves, by the promise that their God would "go before them like a consuming fire to destroy them, and deliver their kings into their hand."

Still further to animate their hope, the inspired orator expatiated, in glowing figures, on the surpassing prosperity, both public and private, that awaited their steady adherence to the laws; love and harmony in their families; overflowing abundance in their stores, and inviolable

security from their enemies. On the other hand, an appalling catalogue of calamities portrayed the miseries of revolt. Sickness and sorrow, famine and war, and finally, subjugation and captivity! "The Lord," he added, "will scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, even wood and stone. And among these nations thou shalt find no ease; neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night. In the morning thou shalt say, 'Would God it were even, and at even thou shalt say, 'Would God it were morning!' Keep, therefore, the words of this Covenant and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do."

From the sketch I have attempted, you can have but a faint idea of this interesting speech. You must read it throughout to obtain a just conception of the piety and benevolence of Moses.

Fanny. Surely his virtues and his services, and now this affecting exhortation, would ensure the gratitude of his people and their observance of his statutes.

Mother. Their esteem for Moses, and their perfect conviction of the divine origin of his laws, did secure a nominal attachment to them. But the essence of the requisitions consisted in the consecration of the whole heart; and all the sanctions of the law, its threatenings and its promises, he knew, would not be proof against the deteriorating power of an intercourse with heathens of the worst possible character. But that they might be without excuse, he continued to provide expedients to counteract its fascinations. He wrote a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and directed them to teach it to their children. He bade them to erect a pillar of stones, when they should come into the promised land, and engrave on it "the law," that it might be always in the view of the passenger. And to impress their memory and imagination, being aware of their fondness for symbols, he commanded them to divide the congregation formally and place them on the two mounts Ebal and Gerizzim; Simeon and Levi, Judah and Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin, on the latter; and Reuben, Asher and Gad, Zebulon, Dan, and Naphtali, on the

former; whilst the Levites rehearsed in their hearing, the blessings that awaited their inflexible allegiance, and the curses that would be the infallible punishment of their apostacy. And, lastly, he delivered the "book of the law" to the priests, and commanded them to keep it in the "side of the ark" of the Covenant, and read the whole every seventh year to the assembled tribes, at the feast of tabernacles.

Catherine. What do you mean by the book of the law?

Mother. The five books of Moses, both singly and collectively, are spoken of in the Scriptures under that title. They are also called "the books of Moses," and sometimes are designated merely by his name, as for instance, "they have Moses and the Prophets."

Having finished his address to the people, he pronounced a prophetic blessing on each tribe, and gave a parting charge to Joshua, in the presence of all Israel, assuring him, both for his and their encouragement, that the Lord of hosts would conduct them across Jordan to the land he had given to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob!

He then left them, and ascended, alone, a ridge of mountains that lay near the border of Moab, and from Pisgah, the summit, he was indulged with an extensive prospect of the land he had earnestly desired to enter. The stream of Jordan flowed at his feet; the lakes of Cinnereth and Asphaltite, and the stately cedars of Lebanon on the north; and the spreading palm trees of the south, were at once in his view. He beheld the cities and the fields, which his brethren were to possess; but their faces he saw no more—for there he died—and in a valley not far distant, it is said, "*the Lord* buried him," and no man has ever discovered his sepulchre! (B. C. 1471.)

Catherine. That is a very extraordinary fact. Why was he not buried with funeral honours like other celebrated men? It would have gratified the people who had received so many invaluable services from him, to have paid this last tribute to his worth.

Mother. He who recorded the death and secret burial of Moses, has barely related the fact, without one word of comment—a fact so very remarkable, that the curiosity of the reader is irresistibly impelled to look for a rea-

son, which is supposed to be discovered in the high veneration of Israel for their great legislator. Had they known the place of his interment, they would have held it sacred, and have transgressed the bounds of allowable respect for his remains.

Catherine. Is this account of Moses's death in the book of Deuteronomy—a book of his own writing?

Mother. It is in the last chapter of that book; and some have not scrupled to believe was prophetically written by himself, as many other prophecies are found in the Pentateuch. But we are not driven to this conclusion by the absence of every other mode of explanation. The last chapter of Deuteronomy was most probably composed by Joshua, the writer of the following book, and injudiciously placed with the writings of Moses, by those who arranged the sacred canon, because it concludes his story.

But if the bereaved congregation were not permitted to weep over the grave of their inestimable benefactor, they were allowed to remain inactive in their encampment thirty days, indulging their sorrow, although they were in sight of their ultimate object.

Charles. Thirty days, I remember, they mourned for Aaron, likewise. I did not know, until now, that our custom of mourning thirty days for distinguished men, had an origin so ancient or respectable.

Mother. In reading the scriptures, we find many customs, now become so common, that we never think of inquiring whence they came: like this of mourning a certain time, they do not always express our genuine feelings. In observing this decent custom, we often, indeed, pay to pre-eminent virtue the respect it deserves; but seldom are we called to lament, like the Israelites, a national loss—a benefactor of mankind! Their affliction was deep and sincere, and embittered by the reproachful conviction, that but for their own insupportable provocations, they might still have enjoyed his society, and profited by his wisdom. For although he was an hundred and twenty years old, he possessed all his faculties in their native strength. “His eye was not dim, nor was his natural force abated.”

For many years after his death, his people adhered

faithfully to his precepts, and through all their revolutions, they continue to revere his authority. While the world endures, he will remain the greatest of historians and prophets. His writings are his most expressive eulogy. They reflect the wise and upright man, and the loyal servant of his master. His style is plain and perspicuous, such as the importance of his subject demanded; yet interspersed with the most beautiful and sublime strains of poetry, where they could be used with propriety. His prophetic ode, in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy, is said by an elegant and learned writer on Hebrew poetry, to be “singularly magnificent, and scarcely to be paralleled from all the choicest treasures of the muses.” As a prophet, he has this testimony to his transcendent dignity—that there arose in Israel, not one like him, “whom the Lord knew face to face!” His whole ceremonial law is a prophecy of that divine Teacher, who he predicted should come, in these remarkable words:—“The Lord your God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*: unto him ye shall hearken.”

From the midst of the brethren of Moses, the descendants of Israel, the Lord our God has raised up unto us a Prophet, “in whom he is well pleased;” and happy are we if we hearken unto him.

JOSHUA.

Mother. The incident with which the book of Joshua, the subject of our ensuing conversation, commences, exemplifies a consoling truth, presented every day to our observation—that the evils to which we are inevitably subjected in this life, are ever accompanied by circumstances which mitigate their severity—and sometimes even produce results the most beneficial. The loss of a friend with whom we have passed many years in delightful intercourse, is an affliction so common, that almost every heart can tell its bitterness. If his wisdom has illumined our path—if his power and his zeal have promoted our interest—we

feel that a right hand is cut off: but if many failures in our own duty to this friend cloud the recollection of past pleasure—now too late to make any reparation—what is there left to complete our humiliating regret? To embitter the sorrow of the Israelites for the death of their illustrious legislator, the history of whose virtues was but the history of their own ingratitude—all these distressing reflections were combined, yet the sad event brought with it a cheering consolation. The voice of their visible Protector reminded them that the last remaining obstacle to their entrance into the promised land was now removed; “Moses my servant is dead, *now therefore* arise and go over this Jordan.”

Fanny. Then about to encounter hostile nations, they would most sensibly feel the loss of their experienced Chief.

Mother. That loss, irreparable as it might seem, was supplied by the substitution of Joshua, appointed by God himself, and consecrated by the hands of Moses, to succeed him in the command of the Israelites.

That no diffidence, however, might retard the movements of Joshua, “The Lord,” who had supported Moses by his presence, now appeared to his successor, and assured him, that he should “divide the promised inheritance to the children of Abraham.” “Only be thou strong, and very courageous,” (said he) “that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand, nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein, day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein, for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success.”

Thus graciously encouraged, the new commander began his arrangements for taking possession of Canaan. Two confidential young men were despatched to examine the strength of the city of Jericho, which, lying very near to the opposite shore of Jordan, must be taken before they could penetrate into the country.

Catherine. That would seem to have been an unneces-

sary precaution. The Lord their God had promised to go with them—what strength or power could counteract his will?

Mother. It is not generally the will of Heaven to bestow blessings on those who do not seek them. Had the Israelites been put into the possession of Canaan without any extraordinary exertions of their own—the indolent might have taken encouragement to fold their arms, and presumptuously expect the unclouded sunshine of prosperity. I just now recited a part of the charge that was given to Joshua, for the purpose of showing you that the favourable designs of Providence exempt not us from the performance of duty, and as “the book of the law” was given to him for a guide, so the sacred Scriptures are given to us, to point out the “way” in which we may hope for “good success.” So well was Joshua instructed, that although he knew himself to be engaged in an enterprise that would ultimately be successful, he proceeded with as much caution as if his own sagacity, or the valour of his men, were his only dependence.

When he had despatched the messengers, he called together his officers, and directed them to go through the camp, and command the people to prepare their provision, for within three days they should pass over the Jordan. The tribes who were already located on the eastern bank in the blooming land of Gilead, were reminded of their engagement to leave their families and assist their brethren until they too should have a permanent habitation. They readily declared their adherence to their promise—and their loyal resolution to obey and to support Joshua, as the lawful successor of Moses, devoting themselves even to the punishment of death, should any be found disobedient. Whilst Joshua was busied in these dispositions for a removal, his messengers had made their way into the city of Jericho, though not without the peril of their lives. The victorious march of Israel had spread dismay among the Canaanites—their army but a few miles distant, the presence of two strangers in the city would naturally create suspicion; accordingly they were carefully watched, and at length traced to the house of Rahab, a woman who lived on the eastern wall of the town, and a mandate from the

king of Jericho required her instantly to deliver them up. But their hostess, aware of their danger, had humanely concealed them on the top of her house, beneath a quantity of flax which had been spread there to dry, so that they escaped the search of the king's messengers. She acknowledged, indeed, that they had lodged in her house, whence they had but lately departed, and affected to assist in their arrest, by directing the messengers towards the river, the fords of which she said the spies could not yet have reached. Having thus rid herself of the unwelcome intruders, she repaired to her guests, and hastened them away, confessing that she had been prompted to this act of kindness, by the universal terror of her countrymen, and her own perfect conviction that the whole land was given to the Israelites by *their* God. She believed he was the *true* God, and that his purposes could not be frustrated; she therefore entreated that she and her relatives might be protected when Jericho should be taken. This just return for the favour she had shown to them, they readily promised, on the condition that her family and friends should be gathered into her house, and there remain: but for the safety of an individual who should venture into the streets, they would not be responsible.

Charles. How could the young men be concealed on the top of a house?

Mother. The roofs of houses are not in every country inclined like ours. In Palestine, and other eastern climates, they were then flat, and still continue so—for customs, with them, do not fluctuate as they do with us. The inhabitants walk, sit, and sometimes, in hot weather, even sleep on them. The Mosaical law embracing a great variety of particulars, affecting the safety or the comfort of its subjects, provided that they should make "battlements for their roof, that they might not bring blood upon their house, if any man should fall from thence." Their houses were also low,—not more than one, or at most two stories high. That of Rahab, being at the extremity of the city, the escape of the spies was facilitated by letting them down by a cord from the top, to the outside of the wall—after it had been agreed by the parties, that the same cord (which being of scarlet would be conspicuous) should be exhibited

in a window in front, as a signal to the Israelites, and ensure the inviolability of the mansion. Pursuing her advice, the young men hastened to the neighbouring mountains, and lay in their recesses, until their pursuers, despairing of success, had returned to the city. On the evening of the third day, they arrived safely at the Hebrew camp, and encouraged their brethren to go boldly forward—for the disheartened Canaanites would be an easy conquest.

Early, therefore, the next morning, being the ninth day of the month, they decamped and drew near to the river, where they lodged that night, and received orders for the operations of the following day.

The priests whose business it was to bear the Tabernacle and its furniture, were commanded to lead the way. Forty thousand of the two and a half tribes, all armed for battle, were to follow next at the distance of two thousand cubits from the ark, and the nine other tribes in regular order, to bring up the rear. Twelve men, one out of every tribe, were appointed to erect a pillar of stones in the midst of the river, to commemorate their passage, and to carry thence twelve other stones, for a similar monument on the opposite shore.

The priests were further commanded to stand still when their feet should touch the waters of Jordan—for there they should receive a signal proof of the power and protection of Jehovah.

Catherine. What distance in our measurement would these two thousand cubits make, between the ark and the people?

Mother. I am not able to tell you. Two cubits of different measures are used in scripture. It is uncertain which of the two is here intended. If the shorter be the one, it would make but one mile—the longer, would perhaps make two.* It is however supposed to be the same measure which is called “a sabbath day’s journey;” because the Israelites were allowed to travel on that day,

* This calculation is adopted with diffidence. It may be sufficient for our purpose—though its accuracy is contested by some Biblical critics.

only to the tabernacle, which for ages was the place where alone they might sacrifice, and now in their encampment was pitched in the centre, two thousand cubits distant from the position of the nearest tribes.

In the manner arranged by their general, the whole congregation removed from their station and approached the margin of the river. The priests who bore the ark containing the testimony of God's Covenant, stept fearlessly into the water, although it was now the time of barley harvest; when Jordan receiving the melted snow from the mountains of Libanus, overflows his banks. There they halted, in obedience to the orders they had received, and lo! the promised miracle appears! A passage, such as had been made for their fathers through the Red Sea, was opened through the Jordan for them, "the waters above, rising up on a heap before the city Adam"—far beyond the place where the Israelites stood, and those below flowing rapidly on towards the Dead Sea, whilst the wondering people passed over the dried channel!

Charles. That was indeed a signal instance of divine favour—yet the Jordan is, I believe, but a little stream?

Mother. Your sister, whose geographical knowledge is somewhat fresher than mine, can tell you its size.

Catherine. It is a little stream in comparison with many other rivers, especially our American waters, though it is the most considerable in all that region. It is said by some writers to take its name from *Jor*, a stream, and *Dan*, a city near its source in the mountains of Lebanon. Passing through the lakes of Samochon, and Tiberias, in a course nearly south, and augmented by several rivulets—particularly the well known brook *Cedron*—it terminates in the Dead Sea. Its whole length does not much exceed an hundred miles. It is now so diminished in breadth as to be not more than twenty yards: but it is deep and rapid.

Charles. It might however have been forded, for the pursuers of the spies were directed to seek them "by the fords." Why then was a miracle performed, for which there seems to have been no necessity?

Mother. There were fords—though, perhaps, not a convenient passage for a multitude of men, women, and children. Besides, it was the pleasure of the Almighty to

indulge the natural timidity of the Israelites, and reprove, at the same time, their habitual distrust of his protection. But the particular reason assigned for the exhibition of this miracle—was “to magnify their new conductor in their sight,” that they might certainly know that “the Lord of Hosts was with Joshua as he had been with Moses.” All their permanent statutes had been communicated immediately to Moses, and by that honoured servant delivered to the chosen nation. In the prosecution of their journey, and the conquest of Canaan, Joshua was likewise to be distinguished above his brethren. When *he* therefore commanded the priests to stand still in the river—the waters were separated! He then called the twelve men whom he had selected for this service, and directed them to pass over before the Ark, carrying with them twelve stones from the midst of Jordan to the opposite shore.

The forty thousand from the tribes of Reuben, of Gad and Manasseh, then led the van, and the whole congregation of Israel followed. Twelve stones were set up in the bed of the river, where the sacred Tabernacle rested—the priests still waiting until all was finished. At the command of Joshua, they then came up out of the channel of the river, and the waters returned to their place, “overflowing all their banks as they did before!” That night they encamped between Jordan and Jericho, at a place called Gilgal, and there the twelve stones which they had borne from the midst of the channel were erected for a testimony to their children of the miracle they had witnessed, when they should ask in time to come—“What mean these stones?” And “that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty.”

Fanny. If the river were deep as it is represented to have been, the twelve stones erected in the midst of it, would be covered by the waters, not answering the design of a monument.

Mother. Those which were carried to the eastern border, are said to be “such as a man might carry on his shoulder.” Those which “Joshua set up where the feet of the priests stood firm on dry ground” are not so described. They may have been of enormous size, for they had thousands of men to labour at the work, and the

historian assures us, they were yet to be seen, at the time of his writing.

The posterity of Abraham began now to realize the promise that had been given to their forefathers. Immediately after their entrance into Canaan, the manna ceased to fall, and they feasted on the fruits of that delightful land! And it is remarkable that this event took place at a season when they might formally express their gratitude by a national act of religious worship—the time of their Annual Passover. On the tenth day of the first month, they first set their feet on the land of promise—and on the fourteenth, according to their law, precisely forty years from its institution on the night of their departure from Egypt, they celebrated that festival. Thus was the prophecy delivered to Moses* exactly accomplished. (B. C. 1451.)

This last miracle added to all that had gone before, operated powerfully in favour of the progress of the Israelites. The inhabitants of Canaan trembled before the omnipotence of the God of Israel—but they did not repent of their sins, and endeavour to avert his anger. The king of Jericho did not, like his subject, Rahab, submit to the appointed conqueror, and make terms for himself and his people, but foolishly determined on resistance. His “city was straitly shut up, none went out, and none came in;” they trusted in the strength of their bulwark: nor was the singular mode of warfare adopted by the Hebrew general, at all calculated to weaken their confidence. No preparations adapted to a siege could be discerned from the wall of Jericho—nothing could be seen, but the formidable invaders armed indeed in warlike array with their standards waving and bearing their sacred shrine, encircling the city, day after day, and returning peaceably at night to their camp. No rude noise—not a voice assailed the ear—the solemn march was alone interrupted by the sound of trumpets, continually blown by the priests who carried the Ark. In these mysterious circuits, the superstitious heathens might imagine some preparatory ceremony like their own futile incantations to propitiate their deities: but while no step

* Numbers, 14, 33.

more decidedly hostile was taken, they would still rely on their barriers for security. Six days, their flattering hopes deceived them—on the seventh, instead of retiring as usual after a single circuit, the strangers encompassed the city seven times; at the conclusion of the seventh, a long, and louder blast was heard,—the tremendous shout of victory ascended to heaven, and the walls of Jericho fell prostrate before the Ark of the covenant! The ministers of divine justice poured in on every side, and the astonished inhabitants received the punishment decreed to their multiplied offences!

Fanny. I hope the promise made to Rahab, was now remembered?

Mother. It was faithfully observed. She was conducted with all her relatives, and all their moveable property, to the suburbs of the Hebrew camp.

Catherine. Why to the suburbs—why not into the heart of the camp, where she would be most secure from the resentment of her countrymen?

Mother. Because aliens might not enter the camp of Israel, until they were at least legally purified, which could not be done in this moment of confusion. They were effectually protected, however; Rahab, herself, became afterwards a proselyte to the Hebrew religion, and married Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah, and the ancestor in a direct line, of the celebrated David, king of Israel.

Before the city was attacked, it was strictly enjoined, that no part of the spoil should be appropriated by any individual. The silver and gold—the vessels of brass and of iron, were to be reserved for the service of the sanctuary: all else, to be utterly destroyed by fire: nay, so exceedingly obnoxious had it become, for its pre-eminent guilt, that a malediction was pronounced on him who should attempt to rebuild it. “He shall lay the foundation thereof (said Joshua) in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.”

Soon after the fall of this execrated city, Joshua despatched a small party to take a little place called Ai, on the eastern side of Beth-el, a name familiar in the history of their ancestor, Jacob. Insignificant, however, as it ap-

peared to an army accustomed only to victory, they were driven back to the plains of Jordan, with the loss of six and thirty men.

Confident of the support of his Sovereign, while obedience was rendered to the divine commands—Joshua, attended by the elders, repaired to the mercy-seat and prostrating themselves, inquired humbly, by what sin they had forfeited His wonted protection. The captivating treasures of Jericho, they were answered, had occasioned the crime. An individual had been tempted to violate the command. The criminal should be discovered by casting the lot, and the goods he had stolen would be found buried under his tent.

The awful investigation was pursued without delay—the tribe and the family of the offender were ascertained—and lastly, a man named Achan stood charged with the guilt of having drawn the displeasure of their beneficent Patron on his people. The fact was not to be denied—costly robes of Babylonian manufacture,—silver and gold, were brought out from his tent, and spread before the judges. His guilt thus manifested and acknowledged by himself, the unhappy Achan, with his sons and his daughters, his cattle and his household goods, together with all the forbidden treasures, were committed to the flames!

Charles. What! the innocent children destroyed for the guilt of their father! Such a procedure is very contrary to our notions of equity!

Mother. How can we pretend, my dear, to answer for their innocence? The sons and daughters of Achan may have participated in his guilt—they may have assisted in concealing the treasures. But should it be otherwise in this, or in any other instance recorded in scripture, where the innocent appear to have suffered with the guilty by the express command of a just Sovereign,—our cavils are forever prevented by the emphatic question—“shall not the Judge of the earth do right?” Besides, this high act of sovereignty is the exclusive prerogative of Deity, and never intended for our imitation. The Mosaical law expressly delivered the equitable precept—“the father shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the chil-

dren be put to death for the father—every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”*

But since we are unquestionably taught by our own experience, that our personal vices very often involve our dearest connexions inevitably in suffering, how careful ought each of us to be of our own conduct!

After this painful expiation, the town of Ai was taken by an *ambuscade*, the first of which we read in history—and the army was gratified with the spoil.

Catherine. An ambuscade is a deception: was this mode of warfare sanctioned by divine command?

Mother. It was expressly commanded in this instance; nor are we obliged to refer its vindication to the arbitrary laws by which the war upon the Canaanites was directed. Stratagems in war are not moral deceptions—they are expected by both parties—and both are prepared—so that they would be disappointed did they not occur.

The Israelites being now in the neighbourhood of the mountains Ebal and Gerizzim, where they had been commanded by Moses to build an Altar, and promulgate the Law, they desisted from the further prosecution of the war until that duty was performed. An Altar was erected on Mount Ebal, the law was inscribed and sacrifices were offered on it. The tribes then divided after the manner prescribed by Moses, and took their stations on either Mount, the priests standing on each side of the ark, and the whole congregated people, women, children, and strangers, all attending, the statutes of Moses were read to them by Joshua, and the blessings and the cursings were pronounced in their hearing.†

Whilst they were thus piously engaged, the Canaanitish princes were combining to attack the Israelites, regarded with so much terror! At the same time an embassy, with all the appearance of having travelled from a very distant country, arrived at the camp at Gilgal, soliciting the friendship of Joshua. Knowing himself to be surrounded by enemies, he inquired particularly whence they came. “From a far distant country,” they said, and they exhibited their faded garments and worn-out sandals—their

* Deut. 34, 16.

† Deut. 27.

wine-bottles, now empty, and rent with long use, and their bread which they had taken fresh from their ovens, now moulded—as evidences of the length of their journey.

Fanny. These bottles, which are said to have been *rent*, must have been the leathern bottles which were in use in ancient times.

Mother. They are still in use, not only for carrying wine, in several countries of the East, and in the South of Europe, but for the transportation of honey and other liquids, especially for water in their dreary journeys across the deserts of Arabia.

Fanny. Were not bottles of glass also used by the Israelites?

Mother. They are said to have been invented only in the fifteenth century. Earthen bottles are supposed to have been used in very early times.

The people of Israel were somewhat suspicious of the integrity of these Envoys—yet, without asking that “counsel,” which the mystic breast-plate of the High Priest would have imparted, the princes made a league with them. But they were awakened to a sense of their erroneous precipitancy, when in a few days they received an application from their new allies imploring their aid against the neighbouring kings, who had turned their arms against them, because they had deserted the league against the strangers, and made a peace with their chiefs. This discovery exasperated the common people, especially when they learned that Gibeon, the chief city of the impostors, was very large and wealthy, and they would have taken instant vengeance, had they not been restrained by their officers. “We have plighted our faith (said they) to protect them: we must therefore let them live; but they shall not be admitted to the dignities of free citizens—they shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation—because they have deceived us.”

The army of Joshua, appeased in some degree by this compromise, yielded to the pressing entreaty of the Gibeonites—“come up quickly and save us, for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.” But the Amorites, though they fought

desperately for their lives, could make no stand against the invincible Israelites. They fled and drew the pursuers from the open plain into their valleys and mountains. Evening approached, and Joshua beheld his people in the heart of a country entirely unknown to them—the darkness of night might enable their adversaries to surround them—and all might be lost before the return of day. In this perilous situation he ventured to lift up his hands to Jehovah, the Lord of the Universe, and implore his immediate interposition—"Sun stand thou still (cried he) upon Gibeon—and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon!" His prayer was heard, the Sun stood still, and the Moon rested, the whole length of a day—the elements of nature contributed their aid—hail-stones of enormous size descended, and together with the heaven-directed sword of Joshua, completed the slaughter of the devoted Amorites!

Charles. Dear mother, you cannot believe that the sun and the moon were literally stayed in their course?

Mother. Why should I question the reality of this miracle more than that of others? Our imagination cannot reach the immensity of unlimited power, to which all things are possible. Nor is this stupendous prodigy represented as of common occurrence. The inspired writer affirms, that "there was no day like that either before, or since, that the Lord hearkened in such an extraordinary manner to the voice of a man," and he confirms his own relation by an appeal to another record—"the book of Jasher."

Fanny. Where is that book to be found?

Mother. It has been lost many ages; but that it once existed, is plain from the frequent mention of it in sacred history.

These unquestionable indications of the splendid destiny of this peculiar people, did not yet intimidate the natives of Canaan.

Other confederacies were formed and successively subdued. Six or seven years were spent in continual warfare, until one and thirty kingdoms were taken, when far advanced in years, and having yet to make arrangements for the future government of Israel, Joshua "rested from war." The first work of this interval of peace, was to provide a

place for public worship. Shiloh, in the portion of Ephraim, was chosen, and there the Tabernacle was established in the presence of the whole nation, and from this epoch the Israelites began to reckon their year of Jubilee.

Although much of the territory remained yet to be conquered, the venerable chief of Israel, persuaded of the faithfulness of the Lord of hosts, considered the whole as already in their possession, and proceeded to the division of Canaan, agreeably to the directions left by Moses. The coast of the *Great Sea* or Mediterranean, from Philistia, on the south, to Phœnicia on the north, was still inhabited by idolaters—but commissioners were nevertheless sent to examine and describe in writing, the whole land. When they returned, the whole was divided, and solemnly distributed by lot before the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

Cities of refuge at the same time were appointed, and provision made for the Levites, who you will recollect, were not to have a common inheritance in lands like the other tribes.

The immediate superintendence of the Deity over this remarkable people, is in no respect more evident than in this; that after the lapse of ages, and under circumstances the least favourable to the preservation of records, and all the observations requisite to that end—they should now be able to trace their genealogies throughout the twelve tribes, and distribute the component families so exactly, that Joshua could arrange them in the order commanded by Moses, separating the tribes distinctly, and providing equally for all.

Catherine. I have heard you question the lawfulness of dividing by lot; and yet in this instance it is sanctioned by the highest authority.

Mother. If we could, in any case, obtain such a sanction, and cast lots with the same solemnity that was observed in this, and other instances, mentioned in scripture; that is, by a direct appeal to Heaven for the result, the action would not be unlawful. But we think of no such reference; our appeal is to something called *Chance*; a perfect non-entity; an act of great levity at least, if not sacrilegious. Because no event can possibly take place

without the permission of a Sovereign whose government is as immediate as it is universal.

The result of all our operations in the common affairs of life, we know, remains with Him: but while we employ our physical strength, or natural ability, we use the talents he has given. In casting a lot, we are endeavouring to obtain a benefit without using the appointed means.

Although I have told you that we are not immediately concerned in the blessings or predictions which Jacob pronounced on his sons at the time of his death, and have therefore left you to read the full accomplishment at your leisure, yet I will not deny your curiosity the gratification of remarking in this place, and hereafter, as it may incidentally occur, the striking coincidences between the foresight of the patriarch and the allotment of Joshua now more than two hundred years afterwards.

“Simeon and Levi,” he said, should be “divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel.” In the distribution of the lands, Simeon had a lot within that portion afterwards called by the single title of *Judah*; which being insufficient for their support,* a detachment of that tribe emigrated southward, in quest of more ample habitations, until they discovered a fine tract of pasture ground, of which they took peaceable possession: whilst another party, proceeding still farther south, towards Mount Seir, made war upon the Amalekites and obtained their lands. Thus was Simeon “scattered in Israel.” But of Levi, the prediction was literally fulfilled. Being devoted to the ministry, the Levites were not to cultivate the land, but had dwellings assigned to them throughout all Israel—that they might conveniently instruct, whilst they were maintained by the nation. Of Asher, it was said—“His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties;” language, which imports wealth, and abundance. Accordingly we find the tribe of Asher in a rich district, bordering on the great city of Tyre, whose inhabitants no doubt were often supplied from his fields, and the table of their luxurious kings furnished with “royal dainties.” Of Zebulon,—“he shall dwell at the haven of the Sea—and

* 1 Chron. 4. 39—43.

shall be a haven for ships :” and the lot of Zebulon stretched from the sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean, where they had commodious sea-ports.

Fanny. You have not mentioned the death of Caleb, who was permitted to enter into the promised land. Was he yet alive at the period of your story ?

Mother. He was ; and now presented himself before Joshua and the elders, reminding them of the engagement of Moses to give him the mountain of Kirjath-Arba—the land of the Giants, because he had traversed it without fear, when he was sent with the ten traitorous spies. He was now eighty-five years of age, yet (he said) he was strong, and able to drive out the natives. To him, therefore, Kirjath-Arba, including the city of Hebron, the venerated spot where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned, was allotted. The eminent services of Joshua too were rewarded by the special gift of a favourite place in mount Ephraim.

The forty thousand warriors from the tribes on the eastern side of Jordan, who had served all this time in the war, were now dismissed to their families, with great commendation for their fidelity to their brethren. The riches they had acquired from the spoils of their enemies they were commanded to divide with those who had remained at home and protected their wives and children in their absence—“But take diligent heed” (said the venerable chief when he gave them his parting blessing) “to do the commandments and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

But when, on their return, they had passed the river, they began to feel that they were separated from their brethren ! While the present generation lived, their services would be remembered, and their right to worship at Shiloh would be acknowledged ; but the posterity of those who possessed *the Ark of the Covenant*, the pledge of a peculiar relationship to the God of Israel, and in whose territories other national monuments were found, might possibly deny to the tribes on the other side of Jordan the privileges of a

son of Israel. To avert this catastrophe, which they considered the greatest of evils, they set up an altar of great dimensions on the eastern border, exactly resembling that which stood at Shiloh, and called it "an altar of witness." This action, so pious and so patriotic, was mistaken by their brethren. They considered it a breach of the law, and obnoxious to exemplary punishment. The whole army was therefore immediately collected to make war upon Reuben and Gad. Compassion however succeeded to the first impulse of indignation, and they concluded to inquire into the matter before they shed the blood of their brother. Phinehas the son of Eleazer the High Priest, and other chiefs of the congregation, were sent on this reasonable errand. "We are come," (said they to the two tribes and half tribe) "to inquire why ye have committed so great a trespass. Have we not already suffered for the sins of those who rebelled against Jehovah? Will ye again involve us in distress, by offering sacrifices in the land of Gilead in opposition to the law of Moses? If ye think your land is polluted by the sins of your predecessors, and ye are become dissatisfied with the place of your own choice, come over to the land where the Tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord; nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God."

Charles. I suppose now the two and half tribes were disposed to resent so harsh an accusation.

Mother. Those who are conscious of the purity of their intentions, my son, are generally less ready to resent than to grieve, when their actions are misunderstood. The eastern tribes on this occasion were astonished at the expostulation of the elders; but they meekly answered, that "the searcher of all hearts could witness for them that they thought not of rebellion against him! They meant not to offer burnt-offerings or peace-offerings, on the altar they had reared; but to testify to posterity their relation to the God of Israel, if in time to come their children should be denied access to the Tabernacle, on the pretext that they were excluded by the permanent barrier of Jordan." "God forbid," said they, in the conclusion of their pious defence, "that we should build an altar for sacrifices, beside the altar of

the Lord our God, that is before his Tabernacle." With this explanation, the elders returned perfectly satisfied, and their brethren offered thanks to the Lord, who had mercifully preserved them from shedding the blood of their relatives.

After these transactions, Joshua lived seven years, during which time no events worthy of particular notice seem to have occurred. The people were peaceably occupied in settling their new possessions without interruption from the natives.—He had now reached his hundred and tenth year, seventeen of which he had presided; and being sensible that he must soon sleep with his fathers, after the example of his illustrious predecessor, he summoned the whole nation with their officers of every department, to attend him at Shechem, between Ebal and Gerizzim, and receive his last blessing and instructions. The recollection of many and inestimable favours, will always be a powerful incentive in a generous mind, to the performance of correspondent duties. To this noble feeling the Hebrew general judiciously applied, whilst he began his address to the listening multitude by relating briefly, the history of their nation from the calling of Abraham to the present day—the supernatural power by which they had been sustained—and the unceasing mercy which had at length given them possession of "cities which they did not build—of vineyards and olive trees not planted by their hands." "Now therefore," continued he, "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord."

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for *me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

Catherine. I hope the advice of Joshua "to put away" the gods whom their fathers had served, did not imply that the Israelites were at this time addicted to idolatry?

Mother. It can mean no less. I have heretofore observed to you the unhappy propensity of the Israelites to imitate the heathens. These people were ever with them,

and around them.—Abraham their progenitor, was taken from the people who served idols “on the other side of the flood,” or, on the other side of the river Euphrates, which being a great river was sometimes called, the flood. In Egypt his posterity were subjected to idolaters, and occasionally mingled with them in the wilderness. No wonder then that such multiplied temptations were often too powerful.

Yet you are not to suppose that they ever entirely forsook their own Omnipotent Sovereign; their error consisted in giving to the gods of the gentiles, together with Jehovah, that homage which was due to Him alone. Hence, they were ever ready to profess their allegiance and promise amendment. When, therefore, their departing general reminded them of the obligation they were under, yet added, in order to place their sinful weakness in a forcible light,—“if it seem evil unto you to serve *the Lord*—choose ye this day whom ye will serve—but as for me and my house, *we* will serve the Lord,”—they cried out with one accord—“God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. He it is, that brought us up, and our fathers out of the house of bondage, and which did these great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way which we went—*therefore, will we also serve the Lord, for He is our God.*”

This was a most interesting moment—Joshua was about to leave them to themselves, and in this last public interview with his charge, he was particularly desirous to make a lasting impression. He would not therefore easily accept of their proffered devotion. “Ye cannot” (said he) “serve the Lord—for he is an holy God—he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins, if ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you after that he hath done you good.” Still, however, full of ardour, they continued to declare—“Nay, but we will serve the Lord.” Thus was the covenant to serve the Lord again ratified by the whole people of Israel. A record of the transaction was made by Joshua, and a great stone set up for a memorial, under an oak near the sanctuary at Shiloh.

Soon after this Joshua died, and was buried in his own territory on mount Ephraim. Eleazer the priest, the son of Aaron, died also about this time ; and at the same period we are told the remains of Joseph were entombed in a piece of ground which Jacob his father had purchased from the natives when he returned from his long exile in Mesopotamia, and which had now fallen to the lot of Ephraim. (B. C. 1443.)

Charles. The title of this book I suppose implies its having been written by Joshua ?

Mother. It is so understood by some learned commentators, who have moreover endeavoured to establish their opinion by internal evidence—excepting, however, some passages which were evidently inserted by some other hand, in a subsequent period of time, particularly that which relates the death of Joshua. Other names of equal weight contend, that this portion of history was called the book of Joshua because it narrates the exploits of that chief: and they also appeal to internal evidence that he was not the author, but conjecture rather—for none undertake to decide—that it was written by Eleazer, by Phinehas his son, or by the prophet Samuel, and some reduce its date still lower. But whoever was the author, it is agreed on all hands, that if not written chiefly by the great captain of the Israelites, it was compiled from authentic documents, left by Joshua himself, or the cotemporary priests whose business it was to preserve the records of the nation.*

* See Gray's Key. Horne's Introduction, &c.

JUDGES.

Mother. The Israelites, by the death of Joshua, being left without a visible leader to the conquest of Canaan, now repaired to the tabernacle, with the question—"Who shall go up first to fight with the Canaanites." They were answered, "Judah shall go up first." Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, and to him the natural prerogatives of Reuben the elder were transferred. He was distinguished by his father's prophetic blessing, and from him were to come the *Star* and the *Sceptre* foretold by Balaam. The tribe of Judah was the most populous of the twelve, when the people were all numbered in the wilderness of Sinai, by Moses and Aaron; and the district of Canaan which fell to their lot, was amongst the most delightful of the land of promise.

It was beautifully variegated with fountains, hills, and plains, and fertile in corn, and wine, and pastures. Here Abraham and Isaac had sojourned, and here were the places most famous in sacred history, Jerusalem, Emmaus, Bethlehem, and others. In the territory of Judah the splendid temple of Solomon arose, and it was his privilege to preserve the pure religion of his fathers, when in after ages it was corrupted by many of the tribes: and indeed such was the ascendancy of this tribe that we frequently find the appellation of *Judah*, applied to the nation, in common with that of *Israel*.

The lot of Simeon lying next, and within that of Judah, the two portions occupying the whole south of Canaan, between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, they agreed to combine their forces, until both should be in possession of the territory assigned to them.

Canaan was at this time powerful in population and arms. It was governed by a great number of chiefs, with the pompous title of kings; although their respective dominions seem often to have been limited to a single city and its

suburbs. One of these petty kings was found on the first expedition of Judah, in a place called Bezek; his troops were beaten, and himself taken, and sent to end his days in Jerusalem, a few miles distant from Bezek, after his thumbs and great toes had been cut off.

Charles. That was a singular infliction! How came the Israelites to perpetrate so useless a cruelty?

Mother. The confession of Adoni-bezek will at once answer your question, and let you a little into the character of the Canaanites, and you will thereby be induced to acquiesce in the retributive justice which exterminated such monsters. "Threescore and ten kings," (said this tyrant) "having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table—as I have done, so God requited me!" The Israelites had heard of these enormities, and therefore inflicted the same punishments on him.

In the valleys of Simeon and Judah were found a powerful people, armed with chariots of iron, whom they could not at that time expel. In the portion of Caleb, who belonged to the favoured tribe, were the giants, or men of extraordinary strength and stature. To encourage his brethren to the formidable encounter, he proclaimed his intention of bestowing Acash his daughter on him who should succeed in taking one of their strong holds, called Kirjath-sepher. Othneil, who afterwards became still more conspicuous for his valour and wisdom, obtained the prize.

Thus the Israelites, by degrees, took possession of their inheritance. But indolence, the spontaneous fruit of prosperity, or compassion—in this instance not allowed—sometimes prevailed over duty. They spared many of the natives, whose abominable examples corrupted their manners and enfeebled their hands. Conflicts with the neighbouring princes ensued, and war, with all its train of evils—desolation, famine, and captivity, was the consequence.

These unhappy circumstances, however, did not take place until long after the death of Joshua. The generation which his mighty prowess had led into Canaan remembered his dying injunctions, and kept the statutes of Moses. But their children "forsook the Lord God of their fathers"—they intermarried with the inhabitants of the land, and erected altars to their fabled deities. Their morals and

religion equally degenerating, the consciousness of virtue no longer inspired them with courage to resist the encroachments of the heathens, who still considering them as lawless invaders, were ever ready to seize an occasion of distressing them, so that in the emphatic language of the historian, "Whithersoever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil!" Yet the everlasting friend of Abraham and Isaac would not wholly abandon his people notwithstanding their repeated provocations, but chastised them by the hands of their enemies, and when the salutary purpose of affliction was accomplished, a deep sense of their ungrateful apostacy and a sincere return to their Sovereign was effected, He raised up by extraordinary interposition, *deliverers*, who restored them to peace and prosperity.

These deliverers were the celebrated *Judges*, from whom the book we are reciting is denominated.

Fanny. A judge is with us a civil officer, but those of whom you speak, seem to have been military leaders; why then are they called Judges?

Mother. Their office was both civil and military. They led the troops to battle, and afterwards held the sword of justice. Some of them may have retired to private life, when they had performed the public service for which they were especially selected; but, generally, they were the chief magistrates of the people whilst they lived. They assumed, however, no external pomp, nor did their honours descend to their children. They were taken from the tribes indiscriminately, and qualified for their part, when emergencies required a chief of extraordinary abilities.

Under the government of the Judges, the Israelites lived upwards of three centuries with various fortunes; sometimes harassed and afflicted most grievously by the neighbouring powers, sometimes prosperous and happy for a succession of years. Othniel, whose valour had obtained the hand of the venerable Caleb's daughter, was the first of these illustrious chieftains. Ehud and Shamgar successively flourished after Othniel. Very few events of their lives are recorded, but they were no doubt virtuous and efficient men; for in their days the Israelites enjoyed

long intervals of peace, the certain evidence under their peculiar dispensation, of national rectitude.

About this period we find two women celebrated as the instruments of great benefit to their country.

After the death of Shamgar, the sins of Israel had brought them under the dominion of Jabin, a powerful king of Canaan. Penitence as usual obtained mercy, and to Deborah the wife of Lapidoth, at once a *Judge* and a prophetess, a plan of deliverance was graciously imparted. To her rural dwelling among the palm-trees of mount Ephraim, the chiefs of Israel came on some common occasion for advice, and were sent away to summon Barak the son of Abinoam to her tent. Barak was a young prince of Naphtali, and had been named to Deborah as the leader of an expedition against Jabin. He was now commanded to take ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, and march to the river Kishon, where he would find the army of Jabin encamped. This was an unwelcome order to Barak, notwithstanding it was accompanied with a promise of success. He knew the strength of Jabin, and even refused to attack him, unless the prophetess herself would go with him to the field, assist him by her counsel, and animate the troops by her presence. She readily consented to his desire; but told him, that his guilty reluctance would be requited by humiliation, for the chief honour of the day would be obtained by a woman! He did not however any longer delay to contribute his services, but hastened with Deborah to Mount Tabor in the district of Zebulon, and collected the troops. His preparations soon aroused Sisera the general of the enemy, who with a numerous host, well appointed with weapons of destruction, amongst which were nine hundred chariots of iron, descended to the valley of Kishon. "Now is the moment," cried the heroic Deborah to her associate, "hath not *the Lord* gone out before thee?" Inspired by this suggestion, Barak immediately fell upon the Canaanites and swept them off with a terrible slaughter! Their chariots of iron were a feeble defence against the persevering courage of Barak: the whole army was destroyed, and the despairing Sisera himself compelled to abandon the field, and endeavour to save his own life! Leav-

ing his chariot, he fled towards a district inhabited by the descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, who had left their own country and dwelt amongst the Naphthalites. In this extremity he was met by Jael the wife of Heber, near the door of her house, and invited to accept its protection. As the Kenites, the denomination of this colony, were at peace with the king of Hazor, Sisera fearlessly entered, entreating his hostess to conceal the place of his retreat, and to give him a cup of water to drink. The better to allay any apprehension that might arise from the avowed friendship of her people to the Israelites, the wife of Heber presented a bowl of refreshing milk to the wearied warrior. Confiding now in her officious kindness, and overpowered by disappointment and vain exertion, he fell into a slumber, to awaken no more! for Jael seized the opportunity and put him to death by her own adventurous hand!

Fanny. I presume, mother, you do not vindicate the treachery of Jael to a vanquished man who had confided in her honour. Her masculine resolution is, in my mind, no apology for her cruelty.

Mother. You are not ignorant, my dear, that wars were formerly conducted by every nation with unrelenting severity. It is a peculiar glory of our amiable religion that it has abolished unnecessary violence, and strictly enjoins tenderness to our enemies so far as it can possibly consist with our own safety. Very many of those brilliant actions that have inscribed the names of heroes on the tablets of fame would be detestable in our view of moral obligation. These remarks, however, although they may serve to palliate the conduct of many celebrated men in both sacred and profane history, may not, perhaps, be applicable to the case of Jael, any more than they would be to some acts of the Israelites in their contests with the natives of Canaan, which are repugnant to our opinions. He who commanded the end, directed also the means: and here we must rest the vindication of Jael, who is believed by correct commentators to have been moved by a divine impulse to put Sisera to death. This victory over the king of Hazor, was a great blessing to the suffering Israelites. Sisera, his captain, was the hated instrument of his tyranny;

the zeal of Heber's wife in the cause of religion and liberty, was therefore celebrated in rapturous gratitude by Deborah and Barak in the sacred Song* which they composed for this remarkable deliverance. As you were pleased with my versification of Moses's hymn, I have thrown this into the same form for your entertainment.

SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK.

Praised be the Lord, the high, the holy one,
 Who Israel's son avenged—Himself alone.
 Our willing hands the sacred banners raise,
 Thine is the cause, be thine, our God, the praise !
 Hear, O ye princes—O ye kings, give ear,
 Sing praise to Israel's God ; adore and fear.
 When Thou went forth from Edom's smoking field,
 The heavens bow'd down, the clouds their droppings yield.
 Seir's dewy mount thy awful presence felt,
 Its bases tremble, and its summits melt !
 From Israel's hills unhallowed altars rise ;
 Then wasting wars the guilty land chastise.
 In valiant Shamgar's rule, and Jael's days,
 Oppressed Israel walked in secret ways :
 From wonted paths they turn in fearful haste,
 Their towns deserted, and their fields laid waste !
 Vengeance, they cry in vain—of all bereft,
 " With forty thousand not a spear was left."
 Then heaven-appointed Deborah arose,
 To rescue Jacob, and chastise his foes.
 From Tabor's sides the awakened people pour,
 And fill the plain of Kishon's wide-spread shore.
 The chiefs of Israel to the combat came,
 Led by Jehovah. Praise his mighty name !
 Speak ye his wondrous deeds, who ride in state,
 Who sit in judgment in the lofty gate.†
 Speak ye, whose happy villages are freed,
 Whose flocks beside your wells securely feed.
 No more the archer's shout your ears assail,
 Rings through the hills, and saddens every vale.
 Barak, arise ! Lead on—in triumph lead,
 The captive princes, and the prancing steed.
 Mother in Israel ! Deborah, awake,
 Judgment, renown, and wide dominion take !
 Why Reuben didst thou in the sheep-fold stay,
 The bleatings of thy flocks, what charms had they !

* Judges, Chap. 5.

† The gate of the city—where anciently judgment was dispensed.

Asher beside the Sea secure remained ;
His freighted ships ignoble Dan detain'd.
Gilead from far, beheld the hostile scene,
While Jordan's peaceful current roll'd between.

Thy patriot warriors, Zebulon, were they,
Who dared the battle that disastrous day !
Thy chiefs, too, Naphtali, were they who fought,
On Tabor's heights they set their lives at nought.
Canaan's impious princes came from far,
Megiddo's waters saw the unrighteous war.
Vainly they strove—the coursing stars can tell :
They fought for Israel, when bold Sisera fell !
Kishon, that ancient stream, avenging roars,
And sweeps the invaders from his blood-stained shores.

Awake, my soul ! thy mighty deeds rehearse,
But curse ye Meroz—said the angel,—curse !
They came not to the battle of the Lord,
Nor in Jehovah's honour drew a sword.

Blessed beyond the lot of woman's fame,
Be Heber's wife—illustrious her name !
The deadly implements her hands impel,
And at her feet proud Sisera bowed—he fell !

Ah, hapless mother ! thou inquir'st in vain,
What direful cause his chariot-wheels detain ?
Her ladies answer—she herself replies,
While fearful visions in her bosom rise :
“ Comes not my son in gorgeous robes arrayed,
The victor's spoil, of curious texture made.
Do captive maids the conqueror's triumph grace,
The blooming daughters of that hated race ? ”

As Sisera, be thine enemies, O Lord !
While those who love and trust thy holy word,
Shine like the sun, progressive in his strength,
And reach thy glorious mount of peace at length.

Fanny. Difficult as it is to reconcile our present notions with the conduct of Jael—or indeed to the participation of women in warlike exploits at all, I must plume myself on Deborah. The appointment of a woman to the dignity of a ruler and a prophet, by unerring wisdom, is in favour of my opinion, that the mental powers of the sexes are naturally equal.

Mother. This is a question, my dear, which we can never determine until their natural powers are alike cultivated by education. So long as one-and-twenty years are unremittingly given to the improvement of the one, and not more than half that time to the other, and that besides

in a desultory manner, it will be altogether unfair to estimate the minds of men and women by their subsequent conduct.

That the Creator has separated their respective spheres of action by a line almost impassable, there ought to be no question, and perhaps the entire devotion of females to study for so many years, might be somewhat incompatible with their peculiar destination; still we may be allowed to contend that a large portion of knowledge, the early and careful improvement of every talent, is necessary to qualify women for the useful discharge of those duties—as well as to sustain them under the sufferings to which they are peculiarly liable. Neglected as they are, and unfurnished with adequate armour, they often meet the ills of life with surprising fortitude, and have even governed empires with ability. I cannot, however, gratify you with the elevation of another female besides Deborah, in this period of sacred history. A female sovereign arose some centuries after in Israel, but *we* derive no honour from her character.

A peace of forty years succeeding to the victory of Barak, great prosperity blessed the land. Their granaries were filled with corn, and wine, and oil, and their pastures offered a rich repast to the lawless tribes on their borders. The Midianites poured in upon them with immense herds of cattle, and laid waste the whole south of Canaan. Their grain was cut up as soon as it appeared, or if perchance a small portion was suffered to ripen, the harassed owners were obliged to conceal it in caves which they dug out of the mountains, and at length to fortify themselves with their scanty provisions in these wretched dens.

Charles. Why did the Israelites, who were always able to cope successfully with their enemies, submit to such cruelties?

Mother. The Israelites in this interval had returned to idolatry, to which they were ever prone in a season of repose. Vicious practices debase the whole soul, and render it unable to make any noble effort. When the Israelites fell into idolatry, they were always punished by an abject disposition to submit to their oppressors. And thus they did in this instance, until seven years of severe suffering had brought them to a sense of their criminality. “The

angel of the Lord" then appeared to Gideon, a man of the house of Manasseh, whilst he thrashed a little wheat in a secluded place that he might hide it from the Midianites. "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," was the reviving salutation of the bright messenger. But Gideon was not revived—the excessive sufferings of his people had impressed his mind with the sad persuasion, that the posterity of Jacob was entirely forsaken by the Power that had wrought such miracles for their fathers! "Surely, *I* will be with thee," continued the heavenly herald, "and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Still suspicious that the flattering vision might be but a delusive effort of his own misery to procure relief—he ventured to ask a sign that he was not imposed upon by his rising hope, but was really encouraged by a supernatural voice. The sign was granted, and the grateful Gideon immediately erected an altar on the spot, which, the historian assures us, was yet to be seen at the time of his writing.

Charles. Why do you use a term so specific when you say "*the* angel of the Lord." Are we not told that the Lord employs angels innumerable as the ministers of his will?

Mother. When the article *the* is emphatically used, as it is in this place and many others, it is not to be applied to one of those ministering spirits, but to that august personage, of whom it is said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." By a comparison of various scriptures, it appears that "the angel of the Lord," who often spoke to the patriarchs, to Moses, and to Joshua, was the same uncreated being who led his church through the wilderness. Sometimes he is called the angel, or "the messenger of the covenant," because he was the Mediator of the covenant between God and man. And this was He who now demonstrated his authority by a miracle, and inspired Gideon with courage to liberate his country. Entirely assured of divine aid in his patriotic undertaking, he took his servants the same night and demolished an altar of Baal, which his own father had erected, and cut down the grove that surrounded it. This resolute commencement of his mission incensed the inhabitants — Gideon was

charged with the demolition of their idolatrous temple, and fiercely demanded of his father that he might be put to death! But Gideon had gone forth to arouse his countrymen—the war trump had sounded, and the people were flocking by thousands to the standard of Gideon! A second miracle being vouchsafed to confirm the confidence of the chosen leader, he went on to organize his army, and found himself at the head of two and thirty thousand men, whilst the Midianites and their allies, the Amalekites, stretched along the valley of Jezreel “like grasshoppers in multitude,” and their camels so numerous, that they are compared to “the sands on the sea-shore.” The Israelites, above all people, were required to remember that they were under the immediate government of Jehovah. That they might not therefore attribute their success to their own prowess, Gideon was commanded to retain but three hundred of his adherents, and dismiss the rest to their homes. This little company he divided into three bands and equipt every man with a trumpet in one hand, and a lamp, concealed in a pitcher, in the other; directing them to observe him carefully, and follow his example. He then descended into the valley, and stationed them on three sides of the hostile camp. It was night, and the Midianites had set their watch and gone to sleep. Suddenly, a loud blast from the trumpets of Gideon awakened them, and whilst they wondered whence the sound might proceed, the pitchers were all broken in an instant, and a blaze of light flashed upon their half-opened eyes. Terror succeeded to surprise, and the tremendous shout of “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon” completed their consternation! Believing themselves attacked by a numerous army, and bewildered in the darkness of midnight, they fled in confusion, slaying one another as they went. Careless of all but their lives, they left their camp full of gold and jewels, the gorgeous ornaments of their own persons and of their camels, to enrich the conquerors. Messengers were quickly despatched to raise the surrounding country—the fords of Jordan, towards which the invaders fled, were guarded, and a terrible slaughter of the intercepted multitudes ensued. Pursuing his victory, Gideon passed the river, and carried the war into the ene-

my's territory, and two and twenty thousand men, amongst whom were four princes of Midian, were destroyed in the combat.

The grateful Israelites, now restored to independence, and transported with the heroism of Gideon, offered to invest him with royalty and to entail it on his family. But their pious deliverer declined the honour—"I will not rule over you," said he, "nor shall my sons rule over you: Jehovah is your king."

While Gideon lived and ruled over the Israelites in the subordinate capacity of Judge, forty years after his extirpation of the Midianites, the land was in peace, and the people were obedient to the laws. But it would seem that they were impatient of the restraint, for it was no sooner removed by his death, than they relapsed once more into idolatry.

Charles. I would not interrupt you, mother, until you had finished the life of Gideon, but I expected you would have told us what were the signs by which he was satisfied of his divine appointment.

Mother. I must not regale you, my son, with too many of the streams, lest you should be content without repairing to the fountain. In the sacred writings you will be continually entertained with surprising events. There you have instruction in ever-varying form from the sententious maxim to the finished argument—from the simple narrative to the florid ode. At the period on which we now are engaged, we find the introduction of the fable, since that time a favourite mode of teaching in the East. I will presently indulge you with this beautiful specimen, the most ancient extant of that class of composition.

Gideon, or Jerubaal as he was surnamed, because he destroyed the altar of Baal, had seventy sons, the children of many wives. After his death, Abimelech, possibly the most worthless of them all, remembering the offer of the Israelites to distinguish the family of their benefactor, repaired to Shechem, a city of refuge in the district of Ephraim, and the native city of his mother, and prevailed on them to declare him their king. The rival pretensions of his numerous brethren were at once removed by putting them all to death—excepting only Jotham the youngest,

who escaped the general massacre, and the knowledge of its extent, only by a successful flight.

When the shocking tale was told to Jotham, grieved and indignant at the cruel ambition of Abimelech, the son of a maid-servant, the weak submission of the Shechemites and their base requital of his illustrious father's services, he ventured as far as the vicinity of Shechem, and standing on Mount Gerizzim he reproved them by the following parable:—"Hearken unto me," said he, "ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them: and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. The olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come *thou* and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the brambles and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

"If ye have then dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubaa! and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo, and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo and devour Abimelech." Now, Catherine, do you give us the application of this apologue.

Catherine. It appears to me to say, that the noble-minded man is satisfied with the spontaneous esteem of others, the natural reward of his virtue; while the less deserving are often the most solicitous to conceal their insignificance under the mantle of public honours; and that the welfare of the state is not sincerely intended by those who place the mean and the vicious in the stations of trust and dignity.

Mother. This is the general moral, and Jotham moreover applied it directly to the Shechemites. He reproached them with their barbarous ingratitude in murdering the whole family of a man who, at the great peril of his own life, had delivered his country from intolerable oppression, and their interested conduct in promoting the son of a servant, because she was a native of their city. Their base and bloody policy, he added, would be retaliated on their own heads. Having pronounced this prophetic admonition, Jotham fled from the vengeance of his brother, and took refuge in Beer. A compact founded in blood could not be permanent: in the course of three years, dissension and treachery brought on a civil war between Abimelech and his subjects, in which their atrocious cruelty to the sons of Gideon was most wofully returned on their own heads.

Their city was destroyed by the tyrant, and their citizens slain: a thousand men and women at one time were put to death in a tower to which Abimelech set fire; and whilst he besieged another, his own death by the fall of a stone from the walls, and from the desperate hand of a woman, put an end to the tragedy!

The death of Abimelech restored order, and the commonwealth enjoyed peace during the administration of several succeeding judges, nearly fifty years. But their authority was insufficient to restrain the people, or they became themselves inattentive to the laws; for the events of that period exhibit the most dreadful licentiousness, inasmuch that the tribe of Benjamin was at one time almost exterminated in a war with the other tribes.

Catherine. How could such a deplorable event come to pass amongst brethren united by so many and such peculiar ties?

Mother. A shocking act of barbarity, a comment indeed on the foresight of Jacob when he said "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf," had been committed in Gibeah, a city of that tribe, upon two unoffending travellers, a Levite and his wife, by which the latter lost her life. The surviving sufferer, made an affecting appeal to the nation, who with one accord declared, that "no such deed had been done since the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt!" and an assembly of the principal people from

Dan to Beer-sheba, and from all the land of Gilead, was convoked before the Tabernacle of the Covenant, to determine what measures should be taken to obliterate their disgrace. Willing that the offenders alone should be punished, the assembly sent a deputation to require that they might be surrendered to the death they had merited. But the Benjamites not only refused to deliver up the murderers, but prepared with alacrity to defend them. A civil war of the most savage character ensued—five and twenty thousand of the Benjamites fell in battle, their cities were burned—their women, and even their cattle were all slain! The city of Jabesh-gilead next fell a sacrifice to the maddened rage of the warriors, because they had neglected the summons to attend the national council.

Their vengeance thus completely sated, reason and nature resumed their authority, and the inhuman Israelites beheld with horror the sanguinary deeds they had done.

The devastation of a kindred tribe awakened their compassion, and repentance brought them to humble themselves before the altar of that God to whom injustice and cruelty are abominable. Deprecating His anger, they presented peace offerings, and spent the whole day in fasting and tears. A deputation was then sent to a few Benjamites, about six hundred, who had escaped from the general massacre, and concealed themselves in the caves of an immense rock called Rimmon, in the wilds of Judah. Four months they had been in this dreary abode, and were now glad to receive a conciliatory invitation to return to their homes. But what a home of desolation had their misguided brethren prepared for the unhappy exiles! Their dwellings all in ruin, and their smiling fields laid waste—their females cut off—and their whole substance destroyed! The regret of their persecutors could not repair those multiplied evils—and in one respect they had tied their own hands. In their phrensied indignation, at the national assembly, they had made a solemn vow, that no man in Israel should give his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite! To save their rash oath and yet do something to express their returning kindness to the ruined tribe, they sent them four hundred young women whom they had spared at the massacre of Jabesh-Gilead: still, as many were left without compa-

nions, another act of injustice was undertaken to remedy the first—and to avert from themselves, the curse pronounced on him who should give a wife to the proscribed people.

A religious festival was held annually at Shiloh, at which the maidens were accustomed to dance, in imitation of the idolatrous rites of the heathens. This was now the season, and the unmarried Benjamites were advised to repair thither, and, concealing themselves in the vineyards, seize upon the young women when an opportunity offered, and thus would their fathers remain guiltless!

Catherine. Then it appears after all, that the other tribes were a thousand times more criminal than the original offenders whom they affected to punish!

Mother. Thus it is, my dear, with poor human nature. We censure, without charity, the faults of others, whilst we do the same, or worse, ourselves!

Catherine. Did the reigning judge remain an inactive spectator of these horrible disorders?

Mother. The immorality and impiety of the Israelites during the administration of the judges, might lead us to conclusions unfavourable to the character of the latter; but the chronology of some parts of their annals is so indistinct, that we may charitably refer their greatest deviations to the times when the historian says “there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes;” or in other words, perhaps, in that interregnum which might happen between the death of one judge and the appointment of another. I do not mean to apologize for them, for the Israelites were never without an infallible monitor, had they chosen to ask counsel—but to relieve this distinguished order from the censure implied in your very obvious question.

About the same period in which the transactions I have been relating occurred, we find a man sacrificing his own daughter, or otherwise disposing of her, to perform a rash vow, in direct opposition to the law and custom of his country.

Fanny. To whom, mother, do you allude?

Mother. To Jephthah, whose disposition of his daughter has occasioned some discussion, not altogether satisfactory at last. The Israelites, ever ready to burst from the shackles of their own divine institutions, had renewed their for-

bidden intercourse with the natives, who, on their part, were ever ready to ensnare them. They married into their families, adopted their manners, and acknowledged their gods. Incense arose from their verdant hills, and their vines and palms were interwoven into bowers for Baalim and Ashtaroth, the patrons of Zidon and Syria! Insolence and domination were the fruits of familiarity with an unprincipled people, and eighteen years the deluded Israelites were repaid by the depredations of the Philistines on the one hand, and the Ammonites on the other. At length, awakened from their delirium, they acknowledged the justice that had afflicted them, and implored the pity of their Heavenly Father: and to manifest their sincerity they cut down the groves and demolished the altars they had impiously built. Resolving to drive out the invaders, they formed a camp in Mizpah and chose Jephthah for their chief.

The gallant Jephthah was a Gileadite who had been driven by his brethren from his father's house because "he was the son of a strange woman"—a gentile perhaps, and therefore obnoxious to the hatred of a Hebrew family. An enterprising spirit, which made him famous in his retirement beyond Mount Hermon on the border of Syria, and had given uneasiness to his fellow-citizens, was probably the true cause of his banishment, while the other served as a fair pretext. Fitted, by a daring soul, to conduct the projected war, he was invited by his native town to take the command of the troops, with a promise to continue him as chief, if he should subdue their enemies. Remembering their former injustice, he reproached the envoys with coming to him in their distress, and refused to assist them until he had obtained a confirmation of their offer.

Before Jephthah took any hostile step, he sent to the king of Ammon to inquire why he appeared in Gilead with an army? "Because Gilead is mine," returned the king—"from the river Arnon unto Jabbok and Jordan. Those lands were wrested from me by the Israelites, when they came up out of Egypt; restore, therefore, peaceably, my right." A second message from the chief reminded him that his ancestors had lost their lands by their active opposition to the passage of the Israelites through it into Canaan: that no claim had disturbed the possession these last

had acquired, for three hundred years, and that they would defend what the Lord their God had given them. But the Ammonites persisted in their claim, and war was declared.

The Israelitish general having now the rights of his nation to defend, as well as personal honour to acquire, makes a formal vow on the eve of the expected battle, that if the enemy should be given into his hand, he would offer a burnt offering, or he would consecrate to the Lord whatsoever came forth first from his house to meet him when he returned in peace.

The war was successful, and Jephthah returned in triumph to his dwelling. But short-lived are the triumphs of mortals! The door of his house is opened, and a beloved daughter comes forth with instruments of music to welcome his return! His daughter—the *only child* of his affection, the innocent victim of his unlawful oath—Jephthah could not conceal his distress. He told her his engagement, adding, “I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back!” Full of pity for her father, and pious gratitude for the deliverance of her country, the amiable maiden submitted; requiring only permission to retire with her female companions for a time, to lament her hard destiny!

Charles. Dear mother! do not tell us that Jephthah sacrificed his only child!

Mother. Alas, my son!—there is the difficulty which I am not able to solve to my own perfect satisfaction. The act was so unnatural, human sacrifices were so strictly forbidden, that some commentators have embraced a construction of the words—“he did according to his vow,” less revolting than your apprehension. We are told in the conclusion of the story, that it became a custom for the daughters of Israel to go four days in the year, to lament, or to *talk with* the daughter of Jephthah; from which they suppose she retired to a solitude in the mountains, and was condemned to a single life.

Catherine. To relinquish altogether the society of his daughter—that daughter, too, his only child, might indeed fill the heart of Jephthah with sorrow: but a *burnt-offering* implies the death of the victim.

Mother. The advocates for the more favourable construction of Jephthah's vow, make it convertible to the case as

it might happen, by rendering the words, *and* offer it, into a conditional promise—*or* offer it, as might be suitable, when the thing devoted should be seen. Unclean animals, no more than human creatures, might be offered in sacrifice—but they might be vowed and afterwards redeemed. It is reasonable to suppose that Jephthah having this alternative, would not hesitate to save his only daughter.

Fanny. Had he a right to oblige her to live a single life?

Mother. Perhaps not; yet the law of Moses invested parents with a very extensive authority over their children. Had she resisted the execution of his inconsiderate vow, he would nevertheless have been guiltless.

Amongst the Judges of Israel we must not omit the celebrated Samson, whose supernatural strength enabled him to perform such miraculous achievements.

Charles. Do you call Samson a Judge? I had supposed him a sort of lawless adventurer, who took advantage of extraordinary strength to commit depredations on his neighbours.

Mother. Your error has arisen from reading the story of “the strongest man,” unconnected with the history of his nation. Great events fill the mind with delight, and sink deep into the memory, whilst the moral end is unattended to, or forgotten.

Samson was one of those men who was endowed from his birth with extraordinary qualities for the public service. His parents were informed of his honourable destiny before he was born, by a special message from Heaven, and commanded to “let no razor come upon his head, for he should be a Nazarite to God.”

Fanny. What is a Nazarite?

Mother. The denomination is from a word which signifies, *to separate*. In the sixth chapter of Numbers you will see the law of Moses for the government of a Nazarite, or a person who had consecrated himself to the performance of a religious vow. Amongst other rituals to be observed, by his class, he was not to cut his hair until the days of his vow were fulfilled. Samson was devoted by God himself all the days of his life, therefore his hair was never to be shorn.

The Israelites were at this time in subjection to the

Philistines,* descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, who had emigrated from Egypt, and now possessed a strip of country along the Mediterranean, divided into five principalities, called Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron. The tribe of Dan, to which Manoah the father of Samson belonged, lay adjacent to Philistia. Possessing as yet but a part of the inheritance which had been allotted to them, and too much confined for their population in that which they occupied, they had lately sent an expedition against a place called Laish, routed the inhabitants, repaired the city, and gave it the name of Dan. Their camp yet remained, and thither Samson, as he grew up, was accustomed to resort and display his uncommon strength in feats of activity. About his twentieth year, in one of his rambles, he fell in love with a beautiful woman of Timnath, a city of Gath, and entreated his parents to obtain her for him in marriage. They objected, that she was the daughter of an enemy, and advised him rather to seek a wife amongst his own people; but unable to divert his unhallowed passion they consented to accompany him to make the treaty. On the way to Timnath, he attacked a young lion and slew him as easily as he would have killed a kid! His father and mother being at some distance on the journey did not witness this exploit, nor did he relate it to any one. Some time after when he went to receive his bride, he found a swarm of bees in the carcase of the lion, and ate of the honey they had made. From this incident he contrived a riddle for the entertainment of the wedding guests, and to thirty young men amongst them especially, he offered each a change of garments if they should expound it, and if they failed, thirty changes should be given to him. "Out of the eater," said he, "came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The seven days† of festivity were spent in unavailing endeavours to discover Samson's riddle, but the secret which their wit

* *Palestine*, one of the appellations of the land of Canaan, was derived from this people, and appears to have been as ancient as the days of Moses, (See Exodus, 15. 14.) but not much used until more modern times.

† See Leah's week, *ante* Book I.

could not penetrate, was betrayed by the bride, whom the young men had entangled by the specious reproach of having invited them to a feast in order to defraud them of their goods, and at last terrified, with the threat of burning her, with all her father's house, unless she prevailed with her husband to explain his riddle to her. She too had her irresistible plea—"thou dost not love me," said she weeping, when weaker arguments had assailed him without effect. This was not to be resisted; his contest with the lion was confided to his wife, and her countrymen were soon enabled to meet him exultingly with the solution—"what is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?"

The base manner in which the young Philistines had obtained the forfeit, might have exonerated the abused husband from his obligation, but the opportunity of giving them an earnest of his powers, was not to be neglected—he therefore went down to Askelon, and procured the thirty garments, by slaying thirty Philistines. Thus the illegal marriage of Samson, so inauspicious in the eyes of his family, prepared the way for the emancipation of Israel. Disgusted, however, by the perfidy of his wife, he left her, and returned for a time to his father's house. Absence, in a few months, mollified his resentment, and returning love brought him back with a conciliating present in his hand, to his fair wife, but resentment was rekindled, and increased into rage when he found her in the possession of his friend! In vain her father excused himself, on the supposition of her having been entirely abandoned by Samson, and offered him a younger daughter, still more beautiful than she. Deaf to all overtures of accommodation, the injured husband flew to avenge himself on the Philistines, whose artifices had destroyed his domestic peace. Three hundred foxes, mischievous animals abounding in Palestine, were soon collected by Samson, which, after tying them in pairs, and attaching a fire-brand to each pair, he let loose in their fields and vineyards, and laid the whole in ruin!

There was no difficulty in laying the mischief at the door of the mighty Samson: he alone could have achieved it! and the unhappy Timnite, and his daughter, whose fa-

tal charms had brought the destroyer amongst them, became the victims of their fury.—They set fire to his house, and suffered them both to perish in the flames! Exasperated anew by the total loss of his wife, and the barbarous manner in which it had been effected, Samson turned upon them, and slew a great number of men.

Either satisfied with the vengeance he had taken, or not fully assured of his ability to defend himself against a multitude, the champion of Israel now retired to a district of Judah, and took up his abode on the summit of a great rock. His departure, however, did not allay the apprehensions of the Philistines; they had sadly experienced his power, and knew not how soon or in what quarter it might again assail them. His destruction, therefore, was a common cause, and to this end, a body of men marched into Judah, and demanded the devoted hero.

Charles. But I hope his countrymen refused to deliver him into their hands?

Mother. The Israelites were at this time in that spiritless condition into which they always sank when for their sins Jehovah withdrew his sustaining arm. Smarting under the domination of strangers, and Judah particularly exposed by their local situation to incursions from their tyrants, whom they now saw encamped in the very heart of their territory, they ventured not to refuse, but despatched three thousand men to bring Samson from his fortress. Yet not knowing that he was inspired for the sake of his oppressed country, they expostulated with him on the folly of using an accidental superiority to the ultimate injury of his own people, and told him plainly, that they must consult their own safety by surrendering him. Samson knew what he might expect from the rage of the Philistines; but trusting that he should be assisted as heretofore, he desired only that he might not be provoked by any personal violence from his brethren, to injure them; and submitted to be bound and conducted to Lehi, the station of his pursuers. Acclamations of unbounded triumph announced his approach to the camp: but when they came forward to lay hold on him, he suddenly bursted the strong cords which confined his hands, and seizing the jaw-bone of an ass—perhaps the only weapon within his reach—the death of a

thousand men attested that God had not forgotten his chastened people! And that Samson, fainting and ready to die with thirst after this prodigious exertion of his strength, might know to whom his deliverance was to be ascribed, water miraculously bursting from a rock, in the midst of the deserted camp, restored him to his wonted strength!

Gaza, in the south of Philistia, was the scene of his next exploit. Attracted again by female beauty, Samson was passing the night in Gaza, but whilst the citizens were exulting that they now had the great scourge of their country imprisoned within their walls, he arose at midnight and departed, with the ponderous gates of the city upon his shoulders!

The Philistines now perceived that every attempt to subdue the invincible Samson by physical means availed them nothing. Their only hope remained in discovering the manner in which he might be successfully assailed, a secret impenetrable to them, but known as they believed to himself.

Another attachment to a fascinating woman afforded the fatal opportunity. Samson, though gifted by the supreme Governor of Israel with extraordinary abilities for the relief of his country, was not authorised to expect His co-operation, whilst he despised the maxims of common prudence. Experience should ever teach us to avoid the evils which have crossed our careless way. He had already suffered by the infidelity of a woman attached to him by no religious, or even national affections—yet he becomes the slave of another of similar character! The Philistines, ever watchful to circumvent him, understanding that he often visited Delilah in the valley of Sorek, sent some of their chief noblemen to offer her eleven hundred pieces of silver, if she would induce him to tell wherein his prodigious strength lay concealed. Several times he amused her with deceptive tales, which as often, on the trial, disappointed their attempts to take him. At length, wearied out by her blandishments and importunity, he confessed that he was a Nazarite from his birth, and would become weak as another man if the hair of his head should be cut off!

Tempted by the alluring silver in her view, she summoned once more the malicious lords, assuring them, that Samson would not again escape, and most anxious to possess their hated foe, another effort was readily made. They came down to the valley with the price of her treachery in their hands, and the glory of Samson was shorn whilst he slumbered on the lap of Delilah! The fruitless struggles of Samson to extricate himself from his captors, convinced them that now indeed his secret was discovered, and his more than giant strength had departed—yet not satisfied, they cruelly put out his eyes, confined his limbs with chains of brass, and put him to labour in a prison!

Sad and sorrowful were now the days of the humbled hero! In the solitude of a prison he might reflect on the advantages he had lost, and repent of the folly which had thrown them away. His prayers and penitence prevailed to their restoration, his hair again grew, his strength returned, and hope began to revive! The loss of his sight might well preclude every prospect of doing any thing for his oppressed country: but the talent which was entrusted to him for her sake, was again directed to her relief.

At the celebration of a great festival to the Philistine idols, the now contemned Israelite was brought out and presented to the multitude as an object peculiarly obnoxious to their insults, whilst they offered sacrifices to the gods who had put him into their hands. Men and women were assembled on the joyous occasion, and thousands in the house, and on the roof of Dagon's temple, beheld, while poor Samson was goaded to make sport for his unfeeling gaolers. Affecting to submit to his helpless lot, he only asked that his hands might be directed to the pillars, that he might rest a while his shackled limbs.—“Now,” cried he, “remember me, and strengthen me, O Lord God! but this once, that I may be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. Let me die with the Philistines!” The aspiration was heard, the columns moved beneath his mighty grasp, the roof tumbled in, and Samson and his adversaries fell together beneath the tremendous crash!

Catherine. Did the law of Moses allow of suicide?

Mother. No legislator can make a law which militates

against the law of nature. No man can give away what is not his property. Life is a tenure, to be held during the pleasure of the Giver, and to be surrendered at His summons. Samson must not be considered as throwing away his own life: he was born and qualified for the public service, and in their behalf exposed himself. If this last act of his life had not been sanctioned by divine authority, his prayer would not have been answered. The Power which had performed such wonders by his hand, could in the same miraculous manner have saved his life amidst the ruins of Dagon's temple, if his services had been longer required.

The history of the Judges affords a striking verification of the predictions of Moses and of Joshua respecting the beneficial effects which would flow to the people of their charge, from an adherence to the true religion, and the calamities which would inevitably follow their apostacy. When they obeyed the injunctions of the law, they were happy; but when they mingled the polytheism of the heathens, with their own divine institutions, they were torn by civil discord, and subjugated by foreign violence.

R U T H .

Mother. During the administration of the judges, a period of more than three centuries, we have seen the Israelites become exceedingly degenerate, and suffering severely for their sins. Insulted, subjugated, at war with their neighbours, and sometimes even among themselves; agriculture would be neglected, and famine necessarily ensue. This cruel addition to their miseries is not expressly mentioned in the records which we have been reviewing, but it is indicated by the distress of that people in the days of Gideon, when the ravages of the Midianites were so wide and incessant, that no sustenance remained for either man or beast, and the wretched inhabitants were obliged to secrete the scanty gleanings of their fields in the caves of the mountains. To the time of Gi-

deon then, we may very reasonably refer the famine which occasioned the introduction of the illustrious Ruth into the commonwealth of Israel, and the beautiful episode of that part of her life.

Catherine. The rural scenes and simple manners described in the book of Ruth, are delightful, and she herself is sweetly interesting—yet I do not know why you should call her illustrious.

Mother. Her own amiable character entitles her to praise; but her remarkable fortune has made her illustrious in history. An alien, accidentally incorporated into the nation of Israel, she became the grandmother of the celebrated king David—and remotely, though in a direct line, the ancestor of the *Benefactor of mankind*, the divine Messiah.

I will give you a brief outline of her story.

A famine, “in the days when the judges ruled,” had driven a man named Elimelech, with his family—a wife, and two sons—from his residence in Bethlehem-Judah, to seek a temporary relief in the country of Moab. Here, Elimelech soon after died, and his sons, Mahlon and Chilion, connected themselves with the Moabites by marrying Orpah and Ruth. In a few years this tie was severed by the death of both the young men, and poor Naomi, now widowed and childless, desired only to return to her native country! Ten years had elapsed since she came from Canaan, and peace and plenty had again blessed the land. She therefore left the scenes of her sorrow, and, accompanied by Orpah and Ruth, began her journey back to Bethlehem. When they had gone a reasonable distance, Naomi turned to her daughters-in-law, and bade them farewell, desiring that they would now return to their friends. United to her by a sentiment of tenderness for the companions they had lost, and veneration for her own virtues, they both declared their resolution not to be separated from her! To abandon their country and kindred for her, seemed, to the generous Naomi, too great a sacrifice, but the affectionate attachment of her daughters penetrated her heart. Weeping and embracing them, she acknowledged all the kindness she had received at their hands, and lamented, for their sake, that the hand of the

Lord had afflicted her ; “ but go, return,” she said, “ each to her mother’s house, and the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me !”

Orpah yielded to the persuasions of her mother, and returned into Moab, but the resolution of Ruth was unalterable. “ Intreat me not to leave thee,” said she, “ for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried ; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.”

A determination so solemn was not to be shaken by the faint remonstrances of Naomi. Her desolate condition demanded the consolations of friendship, nor could she refuse an offered proselyte to the covenant of Israel. Together, therefore, they proceeded towards Judea.

It was now the bountiful season when the hills and the valleys of Canaan were teeming with plenty ; clustering vines and waving grain, just ready for the sickle, presented to the returning exile, a smiling landscape, the reverse of the impoverished fields which she had left, and overwhelmed her soul with a sense of the reverse in her own circumstances. “ Call me not Naomi,” cried she, when her former friends, crowding around, accosted her in the terms of gratulation. “ Is this Naomi who is returned to us ?”—“ Call me not Naomi,* but call me Mara,† for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me ; I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty !”

The widow of Elimelech was not only bereaved of her husband and her sons, but a long residence in a foreign land had dissipated her property ; so that she who was once able to open her hand liberally, was now obliged to depend on others for support ! Her blooming daughter, the sole staff of her declining years, cheerfully embraced the opportunity, which the bounteous season of harvest and the common customs of the country afforded to the indigent, of gleaning after the reapers. Not knowing whither she went, she was providentially led into the fields of Boaz, a son of that Rahab who concealed the spies

* Naomi signifies *agreeable*.

† Mara signifies *bitter*.

whom Joshua sent into Jericho; and a distinguished member of the house of Elimelech. Among the damsels of Bethlehem, the engaging appearance of the young Moabite attracted the notice of Boaz, and induced him to ask the overseer of his fields whence she came.

Finding her to be a proselyte to his religion and his country, and being already acquainted with her character, he approached her with the respect which her virtues inspired, and, welcoming her to his fields, requested, that she would remain with his people, and partake also of his table during the whole harvest. Then going privately to the labourers, he commanded them to treat the fair stranger with delicacy, to leave large handfuls where she went, and even to let her glean among the sheaves. In the evening Ruth returned laden with grain, and related her success to her delighted mother, who, anticipating the probable result, encouraged her to return every day and avail herself of the charity of Boaz.

Thus was the dejected Naomi sustained, whilst a brighter day was beginning to dawn upon the generous Ruth. The two widows were yet in possession of some lands belonging to their late husbands, which their decayed circumstances obliged them to sell. By the law of Moses, the nearest kinsman of the deceased had the first right to purchase, and moreover the privilege of marrying the widow of his relation if no children survived: the first born of the second marriage succeeded, in such a case, to the rights of the former husband, so that "no name, or family should be lost in Israel."

The wealthy Boaz had seen and admired the widow of Mahlon, but there was in Bethlehem a man whose relationship was nearer than his own. As soon, therefore, as the conclusion of harvest allowed him leisure to attend to other affairs, he summoned this man to appear at the gate of the city, where causes were usually heard, and there, in the presence of the elders, he required him to purchase the lands of Elimelech, and marry his daughter-in-law; but this person, whose name is not mentioned, refused to comply with the law.

Boaz then called the elders to witness, that *he* there purchased "all that was Elimelech's and Mahlon's and Chi-

lion's, of the hand of Naomi; and Ruth the Moabitess he took to be his wife." The usual testimonials of a contract were given to Boaz, and he was dismissed with the blessings of the elders on himself, and the fair stranger whom he had thus honourably espoused. The marriage was celebrated, and the last years of Naomi were happy in a flourishing family.

Fanny. Who were they, who were called the Elders of the city?

Mother. They are not described in the Old Testament, that I recollect; but are frequently mentioned. They appear to have been citizens, selected by the inhabitants from among the most aged and respectable, and invested with authority to determine causes.

Catherine. The *gate* of the city, was a strange place in which to hear a cause. Why did the people meet there?

Mother. Perhaps, because it was the most frequented place.

In these early days, there were no such buildings for public purposes as modern times have contrived: but the love of social intercourse implanted in the hearts of all men, would in all times collect them into some convenient spot to talk together; and this spot might afterwards be found the most commodious one for public business. In this way, probably, the gate became the court-house of the city.

Fanny. The patriarchal manners and moral beauty of this story are really refreshing after your picture of the general depravity of the times. It bears so strong a resemblance to the Palemon and Lavinia of our favourite Thomson, that one would suppose it to have been the model of that exquisite story.

Mother. There is no doubt of the fact; with the alteration of some of its incidents, and the embellishments of his fine fancy, it is the same.

The Bible is the inexhaustible source from which rhetoric and poetry have delighted mankind in every age. In a multitude of instances, it surpasses all attempts at imitation. Let us take this opportunity of making a comparison; and we can nowhere do it with more advantage to the poet, for "Palemon and Lavinia" is the admiration of

the world. Yet with all the winning graces of Thomson's genius, it will be found inferior in variety, in pathos, and in moral interest, to the history of Ruth the Moabitess.

In the poem of the Scottish Bard, an aged widow and her daughter are represented as reduced from affluence to poverty, and as having retired from the mortifying gaze of the world, to an obscure retreat. Urged by necessity, the daughter goes out to glean in the field of a neighbour, who is "rich, generous, and young." Her beauty and her modesty attract his notice, and yet more his sympathy, by a fancied resemblance to his friend and benefactor. He converses with her, and finds that she is indeed the daughter of that long-lost friend, the sole author of his prosperity.—He marries her, and competency and joy again brighten the setting day of the widowed mother.

In the history of Israel, a family are driven from their native country by a famine: the two sons, the only children of their parents, marry; the father dies; and afterwards, both the sons, the hope and stay of their widowed mother, are also taken away! Bereft of all, the weeping exile returns to her native land. Her daughters-in-law affectionately accompany her; one is hardly persuaded to go back, but the other, undaunted by poverty, and the troubles which she may encounter among an unknown people, clings to her with the fondest attachment, and, abjuring the superstitions in which she had been educated, declares she will live and die with her in the religion and the country of her lost husband! Now all these affecting incidents, calculated in themselves, without the ornament of language, to excite the deepest sympathy, are wanting in the fiction of Thomson. Here the poet takes up the history, and he gives us indeed a most enchanting transcript of the remaining scenes; still the original is more strongly impressive, because we know the picture to be genuine. Besides, the frank and simple contract of Boaz, and the congratulations of her neighbours to Naomi, when her family was revived in the first-born of Boaz and Ruth, are beauties to which the poem has no parallel circumstances.

Obed, this son, who, according to their rule, was called *the son of Naomi*, is the link which connects the story of Ruth with the history of the Israelites.

Fanny. How delightful it is to get a new idea! I have often thought of the resemblance between these two stories, but I was not aware of the superiority of Ruth to my favourite Palemon and Lavinia. Pray, who was the author of this book?

Mother. We are nowhere informed; but both this book and that which is denominated JUDGES, are usually ascribed to the prophet Samuel, on whose more generally acknowledged writings we are now about to enter.

SAMUEL.

Mother. The story of Ruth, the subject of our last conversation, may be considered as an episode in the history of the Judges; for although we have dismissed the book bearing that title, we find the Israelites still subject to their government, in the commencement of *Samuel*, the book which immediately follows.

The brief annals of the Judges afford but an indistinct idea of the nature of their administration. Indeed it would seem to have had no uniform character.

With respect to their military chiefs, it is distinctly related that they were animated by the "spirit of the Lord," to deliver their country on various occasions; but how, or in what manner they exercised the civil authority in times of peace, we do not learn. Samson, the most conspicuous of them all, we are told, "judged Israel twenty years," yet in all that time, he never appeared in a judicial proceeding. Nor is he seen, like others, at the head of their armies; nor did he, like Gideon, and Deborah, and Ehud; obtain liberty and peace for his country by completely subduing its oppressors.

Samson was rather a scourge to the Philistines, and prepared the way for the emancipation of the Israelites, by spreading terror and dismay wheresoever he went. By the exercise of his supernatural strength, he taught the heathen to fear *the God of Israel*, when he was pleased to display his omnipotent arm in behalf of his people.

After the death of Samson, we find the government vested successively in two persons of very different character—Eli, the high priest, and Samuel the prophet and historian: but whether by command of the divine oracle—or by the election of the people, we are left to conjecture.

During the administration of Eli, a Levite named Elkanah (a descendant of the rebel Korah, who perished in the wilderness) came up to Shiloh with his wife Hannah, to attend an annual sacrifice, and to devote their infant son Samuel, to the service of their God. Elkanah was the husband of two wives, Penninah and Hannah. Penninah was the happy mother of sons and daughters,—but Hannah had no child. The latter, however, being the more amiable, was the favourite; yet the partial fondness of her husband did not console Hannah, while her proud rival continually taunted her with scornful exultation on her own maternal riches. This cruel bane to her domestic peace augmented in the suffering Hannah the desire that prevailed among the Hebrew women for the blessing of children—each one indulging the proud hope that she might herself become the mother of the promised Benefactor, so universally expected. The ardent prayer of Hannah was, therefore, for a son, whom she vowed she would devote to the Lord. Her prayer at length was heard, and she called her son Samuel—a name implying—*one devoted to God*. “For this child I prayed,” said Hannah, when she presented him to Eli, “promising to lend him to Jehovah as long as he lived.” “He hath answered my petition, and I am come to perform my vow.” The devout effusion of the pious mother’s grateful soul on this interesting occasion, recorded in the second chapter of this book, is classed among the finest specimens of Hebrew poetry. Hannah possibly imagined that her ardent supplication had obtained the promised Messiah, who, it has been observed, is here first spoken of as *the anointed* of the Lord—but it is certain that her virtue was rewarded by a son, who became an eminent blessing to the nation.

The precious offering was gladly received by the good priests, who immediately arrayed him in the dress of the Levitical order, and the joyful parents returned home with the blessing of Eli on their exemplary piety.

Catherine. Did the consecration of Samuel oblige his parents to leave him at Shiloh, or did he return home until his age and education might qualify him for the service of the sanctuary?

Mother. The sanctuary was his home from that hour, and Eli his preceptor. But his parents, who strictly observed the institutions of Moses, had an opportunity of seeing him, and bringing little presents to him when they came to the annual festivals. They had, moreover, the pleasure of seeing him improving in knowledge and virtue, from year to year—the dearest temporal blessing which heaven bestows on a parent, if, indeed, it be not a blessing more exalted than any thing of a temporal nature.

Not such were the consolations of the aged priest. His sons, Phinehas and Hophni, priests of course, dishonoured their holy office, by their iniquitous and even sacrilegious proceedings. With the patience and the piety of a saint, he reproved them; but with the fond indulgence of a father, he neglected to use the authority of a magistrate to restrain or to punish them. The total destruction of his house, and the death of his two impious sons, in one day, was the awful punishment denounced by a messenger who was sent to testify the divine displeasure on his guilty negligence. Soon after, the same revelation was made to the young prophet, as he lay at night in an apartment adjacent to that of his guardian. Tidings so heart-rending, involving both himself and his children, could not be communicated voluntarily to Eli. But, as Eli knew that Samuel had been disturbed in the night by a vision, he besought him next morning, to hide nothing from him; and his charge was, therefore, compelled, though reluctantly, to declare the whole truth! The terrible denunciation having been previously delivered to himself, the soul of the venerable priest was reduced to the most perfect resignation, and he quietly answered—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!"

Catherine. How could he, who had not fortitude to avert the impending evil, now submit, without a murmur, to the tremendous result? But, perhaps, he thought only of the temporal death of his profligate sons—since "life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel."

Mother. They were brought, *with clearness*, to light by the Gospel. The heathen philosophers were, indeed, in total ignorance of the immortality of the soul—not altogether so the ancient people of God. If, however, this eminent saint was acquainted with the punishment reserved for deliberate, unrepenting transgressors, I can only confess, that it is extremely difficult to form an idea of such elevated piety, as resignation, under circumstances so unspeakably agonizing. But let us turn from the painful subject, and contemplate the rising character of Samuel. For many years a prophet had not appeared in Israel, and now that another was sent, it was hailed as an omen of returning prosperity, and Samuel was honoured and obeyed. The favourable interposition of Heaven in their behalf, was joyfully anticipated, and they were once more encouraged to an open resistance of their enemies. War was hastily declared against the Philistines, and hostilities begun—but, to their great surprise, they lost the first battle, and four thousand of their army! they now began to consider why they had been disappointed, and recollected that in former days, when their affairs had been regularly conducted, the Ark of the Covenant was always carried to the field.

This they supposed would now again ensure success, and immediately a messenger was sent to bring the tutelary standard from Shiloh. No hands but the priests' might touch the ark of the covenant; and the sons of Eli were therefore brought with it into the field. We may imagine the vast importance attributed to the presence of the ark, from the words of the historian, who says "the earth rang with the sound of their shouts"—and the camp of their enemies was filled with dismay when they became acquainted with the rejoicings among the Israelites. "Woe unto us!" said they, "Who shall deliver us from these mighty gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues." "Be strong, quiet yourselves like men," said they, exhorting their soldiers,—“Let not these Hebrews who have been our subjects, become our masters.” But apprehension and dismay on the one hand, and joy and confidence on the other, were reversed, when the armies of Israel were again put to flight, leaving Phinehas and Hophni,

with thirty thousand slain on the field of battle, and the sacred ark* in the hands of their enemies. A Benjamite, who escaped, arrived first at the city of Shiloh. His clothes rent, and earth upon his head, (in those days, expressive emblems of excessive sorrow,) declared the fatal tidings. The tumult and cries of the people soon reached the ears of poor old Eli, who, blind and decrepit, had seated himself at the gate of the city, where he might hear the earliest intelligence from the army. His two sons he had already resigned, but the capture of the "ark of God" was unexpected; too feeble to endure so many disasters at once, he fell from his seat; his neck was broken by the fall, and he died; being ninety-eight years of age, forty-four of which, he had been judge and priest. The wife of Phinehas too, fell a victim to the blow—her husband slain—the ark of the covenant taken—and now her excellent father-in-law dead—she survived only to exclaim "the glory is departed from Israel," and to call a son, who was born in that sorrowful hour, by the name of Ichabod, which implied, *the glory has departed*.

Charles. These infidels would not value the ark—what did they do with it?

Mother. They not only knew how highly it was esteemed by their adversaries, but had themselves feared its influence: they, therefore, carried it as a proud trophy to the temple of their idol in Ashdod, and placed it before his image. Day after day the god Dagon was found prostrate before the ark: and at length broken in pieces! The citizens of Ashdod, too, were visited with disease, until, persuaded that it was inflicted by the God of Israel, for their profanation of his dwelling, they sent it away from them to the city of Gath. Here, too, the same effects were produced, and the ark was in consequence carried thence to Ekron, but universal terror preceding the mysterious repository, the people of Ekron refused to admit it within their borders. The princes and priests of the Philistines then held a council, and determined to appease the God of Israel, by sending home the ark, which had now been with them seven months. Fearing, however, to approach

* Above three hundred years after Joshua had fixed the ark at Shiloh.

this tremendous scourge, yet unwilling to acknowledge its agency in the evils they had suffered, they settled the question by sending it off in a cart without any visible guide. If the cattle, which drew the vehicle, were directed by instinct straight forward to the land of Israel—then sacrilege had been committed, and a trespass offering was accordingly laid beside the sacred shrine; but if otherwise, then their sufferings had been accidental. Five lords of the Philistines followed at a distance, and returned the same day to Ekron with the report, that the kine had taken the direct road to Beth-shemesh, a levitical city, on the border of Judah; and had halted in a field of wheat. This was the fact. It was harvest-time, and the field was full of reapers. Many crowded from the town to behold this wonderful thing, and many indulged their curiosity by looking into the ark: these were immediately smitten to death, for their presumption. Rejoicing was now changed into lamentation, and the awe-struck spectators, desirous only to remove from them a monitor so holy, so jealous, sent off to Kirjath-jearim, entreating the inhabitants to receive the ark. To that place, therefore, it was removed, and set up in the house of Joshua, whose son Eleazar was consecrated to take charge of it; and there it remained the fifty succeeding years with but little interruption.

Meanwhile, Samuel, who had succeeded to the civil administration on the death of Eli, improved all these events to awaken Israel to a sense of their heartless superstition. The visible emblem of Jehovah, and the exterior observance of rites, he told them, would avail them nothing, without repentance, and reformation: the altars of Balaam and Ashteroth must be cast from them, and the God of Israel alone must receive their homage. Animated and encouraged by a man whom they venerated, to set about the business in earnest, the work of destruction was soon completed, and all Israel obeyed his summons to observe a day of fasting and prayer, at Mizpah.

While the nation was assembling from all quarters, the Philistines heard of the solemn convocation, and rejoiced in the opportunity it afforded of surprising them. The experiment was made; but the Israelites, now in the exer-

cise of faith and penitence, were fit subjects for mercy, and their deliverance was effected by a dreadful storm of thunder, which completely discomfited their confident enemies. Pursued and driven into their own territory, they did not venture again to disturb the Israelites all the remaining days of Samuel.

This interval of peace and freedom, obtained by the piety and patriotism of the prophet, was faithfully devoted to the improvement of his people. Taking an annual circuit round the country, inquiring into their condition, and hearing their causes, he instituted among them those seminaries, that were afterwards known by the name of Schools of the Prophets—so that he was in letters, as in religion, a public benefactor.

Catherine. We, who are so happy as to live at a time when literature, both sacred and profane, is so highly cultivated, may be able to estimate the value of such a man in a less favoured age.

Mother. There is not a more estimable character in the sacred records than that of Samuel. Administering the laws with integrity, and teaching the Israelites their duties, he maintained an ascendancy over all classes of the people, and they were contented under his government, until the feebleness of old age induced him to associate with him his two sons, in the performance of his extensive work. Joel and Abiah, like the sons of good old Eli, were degenerate men, and undermined, by their misconduct, the fair edifice their upright father had erected. Instead of imitating his probity, they took bribes of the suitors, and the people became greatly dissatisfied.

The elders of Israel, seeing the laws daily perverted, and becoming contemptible in the eyes of the nation, consulted together how the licentiousness and anarchy which they apprehended, on the death of their judge, might be averted. But the authority which his virtue had obtained, restraining them from taking any important step without his concurrence, they repaired to him, and, representing the disorders occasioned by the irregularities of his sons, entreated that he would provide for their future safety, by making them a king, whilst yet he lived.

Confiding in that gracious Providence which had hitherto

sustained the chosen people, Samuel was displeased with their request, yet he consented to lay it before the Supreme Ruler. He did so, and returned with permission to make them a king, but he was commanded to warn them previously, of the consequences of their impiety.

Fanny. I confess, mother, I cannot perceive the impiety of asking for a king. In America, we choose a republican form of government, but we do not charge those who prefer a monarchy, with impiety.

Mother. Neither are they impious. The case of the Israelites was altogether singular. With a code of laws given by Jehovah himself, and governed by Him in a visible manner, they had abundant evidence that prosperity would continue to be, as it ever had been, the reward of obedience. To remain under the institutions of His choice was their obvious duty; but in vain were they admonished that their wilful dereliction would be its own punishment; in vain were they reminded, that Jehovah was, in fact, their king—that Jehovah, not Samuel, was rejected! “that the king whom they should set over them would oppress them to aggrandize himself—that he would raise armies of their sons, and involve them in wars—that their free-born daughters would be his cooks, and his bakers, and his confectionaries—that he would take their fields and their vineyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants—that he would take the tenth of the produce of their lands for his officers—that he would take the tenth of their sheep—and their goodliest young men to do the meanest of his work—and, after all, when the cries of their servitude ascended to heaven, no answer would be given.” The reproof, and the warning, and the menace, were alike unavailing—“Nay, but we will have a king, like the nations,” was their obstinate determination; and Samuel was accordingly commanded to take Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, and anoint him privately, and afterwards to take him, by lot, at Mizpeh, from the tribes and the families of Israel, in the presence of all the people. Thus the government of Israel, which had been administered by judges for more than three centuries, was now changed into a monarchy. (B. C. 1095.)

Catherine. Was it no longer then a theocracy?

Mother. It was still a theocracy, for the king had no power to make a new law, or to alter those delivered to Moses. He was but the vicegerent of the Most High, and distinguished above the judges by the appendages of royalty, which they never assumed, and by the transmission of regal authority to his children.

The person of the new king was remarkably tall, and his countenance noble. His princely appearance presaged the future glory of the nation, and acclamations of "God save the king," resounded through the air when Samuel presented him to the people.

Catherine. So it is then from this early example that the invocation on a reigning monarch is handed down to the present day?

Mother. This is the first example upon record, and, probably, the first occasion on which it had been used. It would be well for us to retain every good lesson derived from the Scriptures, with equal tenacity. But, notwithstanding the delight of the people on the gratification of their inconsiderate desire to be assimilated "to the nations," there were among them some turbulent spirits who beheld with envy the elevation of an equal to the unprecedented honour of a crown. These men refused to do him homage in the customary manner of bringing presents, and scornfully exclaimed, "how shall this man save us?" Saul prudently took no notice of the affront, but rather strove to allay their angry feelings, by modestly retiring, for the present, to his residence at Gibeah. An occasion, however, soon offered, to unite all hearts in his favour. Their old enemies, the Ammonites, came up and encamped over against Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants, weak and defenceless, offered to make terms, and thereby encouraged their assailants to demand the liberty of putting out the right eye of every man in the city! This unexpected insolence convinced them that a war was not to be avoided. They obtained, however, a respite of seven days, and instantly despatched messengers to all the tribes on the other side of Jordan, entreating them to come to their assistance.

The news had just arrived at Gibeah, and had thrown the city into a tumult, as Saul entered from his customary occupations in the field. "The Spirit of the Lord" came

suddenly upon him, and he entered promptly and zealously on the public duties of his station.

Fanny. What is implied in these words, "The Spirit of the Lord" came upon him?

Mother. They are used here as they are in the cases of Gideon, of Samson, and others, to signify that the courage and wisdom displayed in their subsequent actions, were inspired by the Lord, from whom every excellent quality must emanate, because He is the source of all. Thus Saul, when his people required his protection, was animated to the exercise of his authority without diffidence.

Justly indignant at the disgraceful condition exacted of the men of Jabesh, he took a yoke of oxen, hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all Israel, with this message: "Whoever refuses to follow Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen:" in the mean time he assured the anxious Gileadites that they should have help. Three hundred and thirty thousand men were speedily marched to their relief, and the Ammonites driven back with a great slaughter.

The people now, exulting in the prowess of their king, called aloud for the men who had refused to acknowledge Saul, that they might be put to death; but Saul forbade the bloody expiation on a day when their arms had been so signally prosperous.

Pleased with this instance of meekness and piety, Samuel proposed to the army to repair to Gilgal, and again proclaim their king. No murmurs interrupted their harmony, but, joyfully proceeding to Gilgal, peace-offerings were sacrificed, and Saul again solemnly recognized as the King of all Israel.

Fanny. Why did an amiable Prince choose so revolting a manner of assembling his subjects, as sending mangled flesh amongst them?

Mother. You are not to consider the act as an evidence of his disposition, but of the customs which prevailed. Emblems were used, in the infancy of language, to express ideas. When that became more copious, they were still retained in the East.

Although the desire of the Israelites to be governed by a king, had been sanctioned by the divine nomination of

the person, and although that person had already evinced the possession of talents suited to his station, yet Samuel would not neglect the opportunity offered him by their immoderate exultations at Gilgal, to remind them, that the introduction of a royal government was an act of rebellion against their rightful Sovereign, and an evidence of the same guilty disposition to apostacy which had often involved their forefathers in trouble. That they might not impute his reproof to envy, or any other interested motives, he called upon them to witness before God, and their king—whether he had not administered the government with uniform uprightness. With one accord, they attested his integrity; he then assured them that an immediate judgment would convince them that they had displeased the Almighty—not him, in asking for a king. Thunder, and unseasonable rain upon their fields, now, in the time of harvest, reduced the inconsiderate people to a sense of their sin, and they earnestly besought their prophet to pray for them. “God forbid,” he replied, “that I *should sin against him* by ceasing to pray for and instruct you; nor will He abandon you; if ye serve him in sincerity and truth, He will preserve both you and your king.”

The flattering anticipations indulged by the nation from the indications of excellence in their royal ruler, were in a short time reversed: he continued, indeed, active and successful in repelling the invaders of his country on every side; but in the prosecution of his wars he was guilty of disobedience to the Divine law—and in his private character he became jealous, arbitrary, and cruel.

Among the heathens by whom Israel was encompassed, the Amalekites, a powerful people, had manifested their enmity so early as in the beginning of the passage through the wilderness, when the feeble emigrants were without confidence either in themselves or in their Divine leader, and had continued their hostility to the present time. For their opposition in the first instance, judgments had been denounced, and now that their cup of iniquity was running over with the most abominable idolatry, complete extermination, both of themselves, and of every living creature in their possession, was commanded. In the prosecution of this awful decree, the Hebrew monarch was prompt and

successful—so far as he went : for he presumed to execute his own will in part. Instead of obeying the express decree that every living creature should die, he not only reserved the best of the captured flocks, but spared the life of Agag, the king, of whose ruthless warfare we may form some idea from the reproach of Samuel when he afterwards inflicted the death the tyrant had well merited—“Thy sword hath made women childless.”

This palpable act of disobedience, aggravated by the pretext of religious zeal, that he had reserved the cattle for sacrifice, received a reproof not less instructive to us, than to him to whom it was addressed—for we are all prone to excuse our transgressions, by some plausible apology, whilst an honest conscience would detect the deceit, and remind us, with Saul, that, “to *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken*, than the fat of rams.”

To this reproof, the prophet added a repetition of the sentence which he had before announced ; “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath rejected thee from being king”—and “hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.”

Charles. Was Saul then immediately deprived of the crown ?

Mother. No. The *rejection of Saul* was the exclusion of his house from the succession : the pitying prophet, therefore, when he professed himself sensible of his sin, yielded to his entreaty “not to dishonour him before the elders and the people,” and continued near him for a time ; but at length he retired to his own house at Ramah, and left the fallen king to his own counsels. At Ramah he remained, in melancholy reflection on the defection of Saul and the disappointment of his country—until he was aroused by a command to grieve no more for Saul, but hasten to Bethlehem, where, in the family of Jesse, he would find him whom he should anoint in the place of the rejected monarch.

Taking, therefore, an heifer for an offering, he went to Bethlehem, and after he had invited the elders of the town to attend at the sacrifice which he was come to celebrate—he went to the house of Jesse, and desired that he and his

sons should sanctify themselves for the approaching solemnity.

Charles. How were they to *sanctify* themselves?

Mother. The legal purifications of their persons by washing, or purifying with water, to signify the purity of heart required in every act of worship to the Creator, is intended in this and in every similar text. The propriety of the principle, and the aptitude of the sign, have been so universally felt, that ablutions have been adopted into the religious rites of almost all nations; and with some, appear to constitute the very essence of their religion. Objects of sense are indeed very imposing, and too often captivate our understanding. Even the penetrating eye of Samuel beheld with much complacency the noble form of Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, when he came into his presence: this, surely, he thought, must be he whom the Lord had sent him to anoint in the place of Saul—but his secret monitor commanded him to “look not on his countenance, nor the height of his stature, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but *the Lord looketh on the heart.*” In like manner, seven sons of Jesse, passing in review before Samuel, were rejected, until he inquired if these were all his children? Being informed that there remained yet the youngest, who kept the sheep, he refused to sit down to dinner until he should appear. *David*, the young shepherd, and who will be, to the end of time, the famous king of Israel, was summoned from the field, approved, and anointed in the presence of his family.

The reigning monarch meanwhile, no longer comforted by the presence of Samuel, became a prey to chagrin. A mental malady, which is described in terms opposed to those I lately explained to you, or as an “*evil spirit from the Lord,*” afflicted him. His servants proposed to soothe him by music, and recommended David the Bethlehemite as a young person skilful in playing on the harp, of a beautiful form, and courageous and prudent in his conduct. At the king's request, therefore, David, laden with presents from his father, was sent, and succeeded in tranquillizing his perturbed spirit. Again the Philistines invaded Canaan, and pitched their camp on a mountain of Judah, whilst Saul, with his army, took his stand on an opposite eleva-

tion. While they lay thus, with only a narrow valley between them, observing each other, a champion of most terrific appearance advanced from the camp of the Philistines, and defied the king to send out a man to decide the contest with him by single combat. More than seven feet in height, and covered from head to foot with brass, armed with a weapon of proportionate strength, and attended by a page bearing a shield, this giant filled the camp of his adversaries with dismay. Forty days, morning and evening, he had thundered his insulting challenge across the valley, when, to the utter astonishment of the king, the stripling David proposed to encounter him. He had retired from his accidental attendance on Saul, to his father's house, and now, coming to the camp, on a visit to three of his brothers who were with the army, he heard the impious menace of Goliath, and the vain efforts of his countrymen to inspirit one another, by detailing the privileges which would distinguish the man who should kill this tremendous enemy. "The king," said they, "will give him his daughter—will enrich him, and exempt his father's house from taxation."

The indignant remarks of David, intimating his readiness to engage the formidable Goliath, alarmed his brothers, and they tried to repress his ambition—but David was designed to vindicate the aspersed honour of "the living God." His contempt of the boaster, reaching the tent of the king, he was sent for, and admonished that he was but a youth, whilst the man he despised was not only of preternatural strength, but a warrior trained from his youth. "Thy servant," replied the son of Jesse, "slew both a lion, and a bear, who attacked his flock. *He* who delivered me from the lion and the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this giant—therefore," added he, with modest fortitude, "let no man's heart fail because of him—thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

Presumptuous as this bold resolution might appear to the monarch, he nevertheless arrayed the champion in his own armour, and put his own sword into his hand; but the elastic limbs of youth, invigorated by the healthful hills of Bethlehem, refused the unnatural restraint. A sling and a stone, the implements of his rural pastime, were the wea-

pons he chose; with these, he advanced to the wondrous enterprise—and with these, one fatal blow laid the vaunting Philistine prostrate on the earth! Seeing him fall, David hastened to the spot, and, seizing his own sword, severed his head from his body, and brought it in triumph to the king!

The complete rout of the invaders followed the death of their champion;—leaving their camp to enrich the Israelites, they fled, and were pursued with terrible slaughter to their cities, Ekron and Gath.

The conquerors then, with David bearing the head of Goliath in his hands, returned in triumph to the capital. The march to the city was one continued scene of festivity; the people from all their towns saluting them with shouts of joy, and the women in bands dancing to the music of tabrets, and other instruments, and singing “Saul has slain his thousands, and *David his ten thousands!*”

Fanny. Did Saul know that David was appointed to succeed him in the government?

Mother. No. But this fatal pre-eminence, either in prowess or in fortune, ascribed to David by the people, was the signal for that cruel persecution through which he laboured to the throne. Whether delighted by his address, or fearing the formidable impression he had made on the people, while he knew himself to be discarded, Saul would no more permit David to leave him, but kept him near his person, affecting to honour, though he envied and hated him.

No quality is more imposing with the populace than military valour in times of public danger. Exposed as were the Israelites to the incursions of their enemies, David might easily now have taken advantage of the ascendancy he had obtained in the affections of the people to supplant his master; and knowing himself to be divinely appointed, he might have soothed his conscience in the attempt; nor did the reigning monarch take care to secure his allegiance by laying him under a debt of gratitude for personal kindness. But the integrity of David awaited the direction of providence, while he performed his own duties with such meekness and fidelity, that he soon became as great a favourite in the royal family, as he was with the

people. Jonathan, the king's son, was united to him in the firmest friendship; and Michal, his daughter, beheld the amiable youth with tender partiality. These flattering distinctions in his own house, appeared to the distorted mind of the king no less than a tacit surrender of the crown which the increasing admiration of the people was preparing for his youthful rival, and so haunted his imagination, that he attempted to destroy him at once by the stroke of a javelin, whilst he played on the harp in his presence; or, as some suppose, while he assisted with his harp, at the family worship of the king, because it is said, that Saul *prophesied*, or prayed, at the same time.

Failing in his murderous attempt, and yet more enraged by the interposition of Jonathan in favour of his friend, the insidious monarch meditated the death of his dreaded rival in a way less odious even to his own feelings, while it seemed a concession to the desires of his subjects. The command of a thousand men was given to David, and his best exertions incited by the promises of an union with Merab, the king's eldest daughter, as the reward of his success against the enemies of his country.

Fanny. Why not bestow Michal, who had already given her heart to the young hero?

Mother. Saul was not then, perhaps, acquainted with the extent of her predilection for David, but it was not his intention to bestow either; for when David had earned the promised honour, and expected to receive the hand of Merab, on his return from a successful expedition against the Philistines, he found her already married to another! The discovery of Michal's love now afforded the malicious king another opportunity of exposing the life of David. His servants were secretly instructed to flatter him with reports of the high estimation in which he was held by the king, and the fair prospect of becoming his son-in-law. But the modest shepherd, so far from presuming on his own merit, replied, that he did not consider himself entitled to so high an honour, his father's house was of no importance in Israel, nor was he rich enough to pay the dowry of a king's daughter.

Fanny. The objection of David requires an explanation, mother. What did he mean by paying a dowry?

Mother. The customs of the East are sometimes the reverse of our own. The dowry of a daughter was a sum of money or goods, which a man paid on his marriage to the father of his wife. The objection was just what Saul desired, and was easily obviated by requiring of David only the slaughter of an hundred Philistines. Double that number of the king's enemies fell beneath the valiant arm of David; and Saul, no longer able to elude his engagement, was obliged to give him the hand of his daughter.

Charles. Saul would now be more tender of the life of his son-in-law.

Mother. The policy of kings, my son, is not often directed or restrained by such associations as are held sacred by their subjects. The express design of Saul, in this case, disappointed in his hope of ridding himself of David by the hands of the Philistines, was, by marrying him to his daughter, to bring him more completely within the reach of his own wily schemes; for his envy and rage increasing in proportion to the esteem and admiration of the people for David—he barbarously commanded his confidential servants, and even Jonathan, his most beloved friend, to slay him privately in the very presence of his wife. The affectionate pleading of Jonathan, however, averted his fate for the present, and David was again brought to soothe by the melody of his harp the desolating spirit of the miserable monarch. But his presence only aggravated the malignant flame, and he was compelled to fly from the stroke of the javelin again aimed at his life, whilst he dexterously exercised his art, for the relief of his wicked persecutor.

Both his wife and his friend, now believing no longer the insincere professions of their father, assisted him to escape to Ramah, where he found Samuel, and related to him all that had befallen him since the king had treacherously taken him into his service.

Naioth, a city belonging to the sacerdotal tribe, and the site of one of Samuel's national schools, seemed to offer a secure retreat to the innocent refugee, and thither he went accompanied by Samuel. But neither the protection of the prophet—the entreaties of Jonathan—the affinity of David to his family—nor the sanctity of his retreat—withheld the infuriated monarch; he not only sent messengers to

Naioth, but went there himself to seize his prey! Fortunately, however, the hunted chief was apprised of his approach in time to make good his escape, and to improve the opportunity by a hasty visit to the city, to consult with his friend. In this stolen interview, the amiable prince, arguing rather from his own affectionate heart, than from any evidence on the part of Saul which might justify David in putting himself into his power, endeavoured vainly to persuade him to resume his accustomed place in the royal household—guarantying the safety of the one, by refusing to admit the objected turpitude of the other. At length, however, it was settled that the prince should try to mediate a peace, and communicate the result to the unhappy fugitive, by a signal agreed on between them.

Disappointed of his object, the enraged king returned to his house, and the feast of the New Moon, which happened the following day, afforded an opportunity to Jonathan to perform his generous purpose. The seat which David had been accustomed to occupy on public days, at the royal table, now empty, arresting the king's eye, he hypocritically inquired why the son of Jesse did not appear as usual. But the concerted plea and apology of Jonathan produced only a burst of madness, in which the javelin was now aimed at the life of his son, and his magnanimity reproached with the charge of meanly promoting the ambitious designs of David to the downfall of his own house. Grieved by the baseness of his father—by the cruel insult offered to himself—and by the disappointment of his hope for his dearest friend, Jonathan hastily left the festive board, and met the son of Jesse at the appointed place in the fields. Obligated to acknowledge the result of his application to his father, the faithful pair met only to lament their ill-fated friendship—and to part with renewed vows of everlasting fidelity.

Catherine. Why did not David, after all these vexations, retire to the peaceable habitation of his family, at Bethlehem?

Mother. Designed to be the ruler of the nation, it was proper that he should be kept in their view, that his virtues and accomplishments might recommend him to their voluntary acceptance, when the time for his elevation should

arrive ; I do not mean to say that such were the motives that actuated David. The conclusion arises from the usual course of Providence, who leads His subjects into such measures as are best suited to his own purposes.

Finding the protection of the prophet of no avail, and still seeking an asylum from the wrath of Saul, David bent his way to the city of Nob, where the ark of the covenant sojourned at this time ; but, finding there a man named Doeg, an Edomite, the chief herdsman of Saul, who might perhaps betray the place of his retirement to his master, whom he would not again provoke to violate the peaceful residence of the priests, he stayed only to obtain some refreshment from Abimelech, the chief priest, and the sword of Goliath, his famous antagonist, which had been laid up in the tabernacle, and then proceeded to Gath.

Here he was soon recognized as the hero who had been celebrated in songs for the slaughter of their champion, and their apparent hostility now reduced him to the sad necessity of feigning himself insane, until he found an opportunity of escaping to a great cave called Adullam, not far from the town of Bethlehem. To this dreary abode he was traced by his father's family, who immediately came thither to sympathise in his distress, or supply his necessities. But David could not see his father and his mother thus exposed to the fury of Saul ; he conducted them therefore to Moab, and having obtained from the king an asylum for them, returned to his cave. One, and another, discovered the retreat of the persecuted youth, and resorted to his fortress, until a little army of four hundred men were called about him.

Meanwhile, the relentless monarch had led out his men to the heights of Gibeah, in pursuit of the fugitive—but not knowing which way to turn, and suspicious that his own servants were really in the service of David, he stood by and harangued them on the folly of supposing that they could obtain places and rewards under his rival, reproaching them with concealing from him the place of his retreat. Doeg, the herdsman, who was amongst the attendants of the king, now supplied fuel to his fury, by informing him, that David had been hospitably received by Abimelech, the priest. Abandoning himself, therefore, to his

ungovernable passion, he summoned not only Abimelech, but all the inferior priests of Nob, to the number of eighty-five, to answer for their conspiracy with his enemy. In vain the venerable priest declared his own perfect innocence, and his conviction of the loyalty and services of David, "the son-in-law of the king!"—sentence of instant death was pronounced on them all! But no one except the wicked Edomite, would venture to put forth his hand against the priests of the Lord. Sole executioner, he gratified the tyrant, by slaying them all in his presence! The whole city of Nob, both man and beast, was next sacrificed. One son of Abimelech, named Abiather, alone escaped, and carried intelligence of the horrible tragedy to David, who, lamenting the destruction he had innocently occasioned, assured the forlorn Abiather of his friendship and protection.

An incursion of the Philistines, soon after these events, afforded David an opportunity of relieving a city of Judah, Keilah, which they had besieged, and of supplying his men, who now amounted to six hundred, with the spoil which he took from the aggressors.

Continually on the watch for the blameless object of his jealousy, the restless monarch exulted when his spies informed him, that David had raised the siege of Keilah, and reposed with his men within its walls. Thither, therefore, he hastened—but David happily received intelligence of his approach, and learning, in answer to his pious inquiry, by means of the prophet Abiather, that the ungrateful inhabitants were prepared to deliver him up to the king—he escaped to the wilderness of Ziph. From Ziph he was again driven by the hostile disposition of the people, who gave notice to the king of the place of his retreat; before his flight, however, he had the consolation of a visit from Jonathan, who supported him by the re-assurance of his own unalterable regard—and his steady trust that his friend would one day fill the throne of Israel, notwithstanding the determined hatred of the king.

Catherine. A wilderness I understand to be a barren wild, unfit for the habitation of man—how then did David find enemies in Ziph?

Mother. The tracts, to which the Israelites gave the

name of wilderness, or desert, were not altogether of that description; they were extensive plains, uncultivated, but affording pasturage for their sheep and camels. Trees, shrubs, and springs, were found in some—though others were sterile, mountainous, and sandy. Such appears to have been the desert of Maon, to which David had fled before the arrival of Saul in the wilderness of Ziph. An invasion of Judah by the Philistines, now obliged the king to turn his arms against them, and gave David an opportunity of escaping from Maon, where he had been nearly surrounded by the royal bands, to a shelter more secure in the caves of Engeddi.

These caverns, so often mentioned in Scripture, abounded in the mountainous parts of Canaan. Some of them were immense, and were used by the people as places of refuge for themselves and their effects, during the incursions of their neighbours—an instance of which you will recollect in the time of Gideon—from which it would seem that the wretched Israelites were sometimes obliged to dig out and enlarge them for this very purpose.

They are still seen by travellers in the "Holy Land." One who has given us a most delightful account of that ever-interesting portion of the earth, says, he found in one of these caves a grateful retreat from a sun so intensely hot, that not one of his party had sufficient resolution to abandon his umbrella, and descend from his horse, to collect the rare plants which sprung up in their path, although they were such as had not been described by former travellers.*

In the spacious chambers of Engeddi the persecuted fugitive, with all his followers, remained during the war with the Philistines.—When that was finished, Saul again sallied out with three thousand men in search of David, and halted in their excursive march, at the mouth of Engeddi; but David and his army lay within its deep recesses undiscovered!

Thus, for several years, was the king-elect of Israel pursued from one hiding place to another, sometimes in the depths of the forests, sometimes in the rocky clefts of

* Clarke.

the mountains. Twice, in the course of this miserable warfare, the life of Saul was in his hand; yet, although urged by his adherents to rid himself of his inveterate enemy, he spared him.

Charles. Who could have blamed him for taking the life of a man whose groundless jealousy had made him so wretched, and who was in continual pursuit of his life?

Mother. In both instances the king was unconscious of David's approach. In one, he carried away his spear, which stuck in the ground, near his head, while he slept—and, in the other, cut off the skirt of his robe. Both were returned; not vaunted, as trophies of his boldness, or generosity; but as the unquestionable evidences of his loyalty; accompanied with an affecting remonstrance on the hard treatment he received. Had they met in open battle, David would have been equally tender of the life of Saul, whose person he held sacred, not merely as his rightful sovereign, but as the "anointed of the Lord." Obdurate as the heart of Saul had become, he was touched with these instances of the magnanimity of his servant, and confessing his prophetic fears that David should reign over Israel, he required of him an oath that he would not exterminate his family.

But David was too well acquainted with Saul to confide in the transient starts of a tormenting conscience, which induced this seeming submission to his fate. Knowing himself insecure in any part of Saul's dominions, he passed over to Gath, and respectfully solicited an asylum for himself and his followers. Achish the king was pleased with the accession of a chief of David's high character, and readily bestowed on him Ziklag, a town near the border of Judah. Here they settled, David with his two wives, and his people, each with his own household, in a regular manner.

Catherine. You had not before mentioned the *two* wives of David. Pray, was the king's daughter one of those who was reduced by her father to lead this wandering miserable life?

Mother. Saul had denied even this poor consolation to David: Michal had been given, in his absence, to another. Abigail, and Ahinoam, David had married during

the years of his exile. The circumstances which introduced him to the former, who was a beautiful woman, are worth our notice, because they exemplify the influence of prudence and gentleness in the character of a wife.

A descendant of Caleb, whose name was Nabal, had large possessions, particularly in flocks, which fed on Mount Carmel, in the neighbourhood of one of David's wild fortresses. The festive season of sheep-shearing coming on, when great plenty abounded, he sent messengers to Nabal, who was found dispensing a princely entertainment, requesting some provisions for his men, who, indeed, must often have been in want during their wandering life. But Nabal's churlish disposition was not touched by the misfortunes of the son of Jesse, nor yet by the intimation that his soldiers had not supplied their necessity from his innumerable herds; but had rather guarded them, from the depredations of robbers, or the wild beasts of the wilderness. The messengers were not only refused a participation in the feast, but sent back to their chief with the insulting charge of following a man who had run away from his master!

The proud spirit of conscious innocence could not brook such ingratitude—two hundred men were left to take care of the camp, while the remaining four hundred, with their affronted leader, hastened to chastise the miserly Nabal. But, happily for all parties, before they reached his fields, they were met by Abigail, the fair wife of Nabal, attended by servants, bearing refreshments of all sorts—raisins and wine, sheep ready dressed, corn, bread, and oil—to the camp of David. No sooner had she heard of the morose behaviour of her husband, than she set out, without consulting him, to prevent the evils his folly might occasion. More than her well-timed present, her graceful petition that David would pardon the transgressions of her husband, induced him to reconsider his angry enterprise. Accepting her present, he confessed that she had been the providential means of preventing him from destroying every thing that belonged to Nabal!

The judicious conduct of Abigail in this instance may be a lesson to all women. In every station to which Provi-

dence has called them, they may find opportunities of mediating between violent men.

When this prudent wife returned home, the intoxication of her husband, from his continued revels, prevented her from relating to him the cause of her absence. His sudden death, however, in a few days, relieved her from the ill-suited bondage, and she became, soon after, the wife of David.

Let us now return to the unhappy king, whom we shall find involved in difficulties more serious than the fancied rebellion of David.

The Philistines had audaciously penetrated into the heart of his dominions, in such strength, that Saul, though naturally valiant, beheld them with dismay. Samuel, his faithful counsellor, had descended to the grave, amidst the lamentations of all Israel; and David, his invincible captain, had been driven by his suspicions to take refuge with strangers! The Oracle of the Covenant returned no answer to his inquiries, nor was his clouded path enlightened by cheering dreams! Abandoned thus on every side to his own inclinations, he now listened to the unhallowed advice of his servants, to consult a woman who had a "familiar spirit!" But, amongst other auspicious measures in the commencement of his reign, Saul had displayed a commendable disposition to execute the laws, by searching out and exterminating the witches, in obedience to a statute of Moses, that no such wicked pretender to supernatural powers should be suffered to live. When, therefore, the degenerate king appeared, in disguise, before the "witch of Endor," and entreated her to call up Samuel, the prophet, to his aid—she refused to expose herself to the vengeance of the king by the exercise of her forbidden arts. At length, induced by a solemn engagement, on his part, to conceal the whole transaction, though deterred, by some lingering sense of honour, from acknowledging his power to protect her—she consented—and the spirit of the venerated Samuel seemed to rise from the earth! Astonished, as it would seem, at the unexpected effect of her own vile incantations, and discovering, in the same moment, the real quality of her visiter, the sorceress screamed aloud, and reproached him with practising on her credulity

to ensnare her to her ruin—whilst the terrified monarch, unheeding her distress, bent submissively to the image of the departed saint, beseeching him to compassionate his misery, and tell him what he should do, for his enemies were in arms, and his petitions to his God were no longer regarded!

Catherine. Mother, what are we to think of the power of this woman to produce the apparition of the prophet?

Mother. It is not to be supposed, my daughter, that she had any efficient agency in the matter; but that her magical spells should be made to subserve the intentions of Providence accords with the system of immediate interposition by which the Israelites were governed.

The family of Saul had been set aside for his disobedience to a divine command, delivered by Samuel. Samuel had told him at the time, what would be the consequences of his neglect: and now that the time had arrived when the punishment should be inflicted, it was consistent, that an apparition, resembling his late monitor, and a voice which he had feared—though disobeyed, should be sent to add to his awful sentence, “The Lord will deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines and *to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me!*” Struck with unspeakable horror, the monarch fell prostrate on the earth: retiring life seemed not to wait the commissioned sword of the Philistines, and was hardly recalled by the affrighted woman who now sought her own pardon by uniting her assiduities with those of his attendants to restore their almost dying lord!

Catherine. You do not suppose then, that the persons called witches and wizards in scripture, were possessed of any other power than that of imposing on the credulity of the people?

Mother. That the unprincipled persons called witches, and wizards, and necromancers, and magicians, and so on, were the agents of Satan, and influenced by him in their pernicious practices, is a defensible opinion: for we must surrender the testimony of Holy Writ before we can deny that Satan is permitted to exercise a limited degree of dominion over this world. But we have the consolation also to know, that it is abridged under the gracious reign of

the Messiah. The titles by which our great enemy is distinguished, such as, "the *prince* of this world," "the *prince* of darkness," the *prince* of the power of the air," and others, are indicative of some species of authority: nor is any thing more certain than the existence of a most deplorable disease in the early days of Christianity, which was ascribed to his taking entire possession of the afflicted party. Many instances, as you know, are related in the gospels of the removal of this malady by the simple command of the Saviour.

While Saul was thus hastening to his fate, the approaching war involved David in new troubles. During a residence at Ziklag of between two and three years, he had inspired his protectors with such confidence in his friendly dispositions that the king of Gath proposed his going along with his troops to attack the Israelites. The dependent situation of David did not allow him to refuse, and he was obliged to set out with the Philistines; though it is not to be believed that he would have acted in the field against his own country. But the chief officers of Achish, more sagacious than their lord, relieved him from the trying dilemma. The possibility that he might seize the opportunity of conciliating his master, by turning his forces against his new friends, alarmed them to such a degree, that the king was obliged to yield to their clamours and send back the distrusted aliens. David and his party had been absent but three days from Ziklag; but three days had prepared a scene of distress for their return! The Amalekites, in revenge of a late incursion into their territory by David, had made a hasty descent upon his city, laid the buildings in ashes, and carried away in triumph every thing on which they could lay their barbarous hands; women, children, and cattle; not even sparing the ladies of David's own family.

The desolation of their domestic comforts affecting all alike, one general burst of sympathetic sorrow at first bewailed the disastrous scene; but rage soon succeeded, and their equally bereaved chief was reproached as the sole cause of their sufferings! The growing mutiny, however, was arrested by his promptitude; for, leading them instantly to the pursuit, the plunderers were overtaken,

while, reposing after the fatigue of a hurried march, they celebrated their success in riotous merriment, and not only all that had been carried from Ziklag was recovered, but much spoil was obtained which the Amalekites had taken from other places. A part of this latter David prudently distributed amongst his own people, and of the remainder he sent presents to each of the places where he had received shelter and kindness during his exile.

Although the pen and the pencil have borrowed some of their finest subjects from the Bible, it yet contains many that remain untouched. The story before us is one of these. The distress of the Israelitish women on the irruption of the barbarians—the conflagration of their dwellings before their eyes, and their own captivity—the desolate scene on the return of fathers, lovers, husbands—the united cries of grief and rage—the tumultuous rush of desperate men to pursue the spoilers, and the sudden recovery of all their treasures, are affecting circumstances, on which genius might delight to dwell.

In the mean time, a sanguinary conflict had strewed the mountains of Gilboa with the dead bodies of the Israelites. Saul himself, and three of his sons, found amongst the slain, completed the triumph of the Philistines. The glad tidings swiftly circulated through their territory, and the royal armour was displayed in the temple of Ashtaroth, their goddess. The head of the fallen king was severed from his body, and the latter contemptuously suspended on the wall of Beth-shan, a city of Issachar, but now in possession of their enemies. Other humiliations might be borne, but this indignity to their sovereign, however little he had been entitled to their reverence, was insupportable. Jabesh-gilead, especially, now remembered the deliverance he had so gallantly achieved for them, when they were besieged by the Ammonites in the beginning of his reign. A party of enterprising men, therefore, from that city, broke by night into Beth-shan, and carried off the remains of the king and his sons, and after burying them in Jabesh with suitable honours, the inhabitants kept a fast of seven days.

Charles. The grateful loyalty of the Gileadites is commendable, for we are not released from obligation to a benefactor, by his misconduct to others. But David, who

had been hunted out of society, and kept in perpetual fear of his life by the cruel jealousy of the king, and whose way to the throne was now opened by the death of his rival, could not but have rejoiced in that event.

Mother. Your opinion, my son, as to the rights of a benefactor, is correct; and your supposition of David's feeling is, it must be admitted, the natural dictate of the heart; but just views of our social duties, will produce nobler sentiments. Accustomed to consider his sovereign as the vicegerent of Jehovah, consecrated by his express command, and voluntarily accepted by the nation, David was very differently affected when a young Amalekite, conceiving, like you, that his officious zeal would recommend him to the exiled chief, came to him on the third day after his return, to Ziklag, presenting the crown and bracelets of the king, and made the daring boast that his own hand had put an end to the life of that infatuated monarch.

Saul had received a wound in the battle, and was discovered by this young man, on the ground, in the midst of his adversaries. His yet unsubdued spirit revolting from the prospect of falling alive into their hands, he had besought his armour-bearer to give the final blow, and thus deliver him from that indignity. The faithful page turned away from the sacrilegious service—but this stranger, who came up at the moment, acceded without scruple to the request of the king: then tearing off the royal badges, he hastened to bring them to David, in confirmation of the deed.

Charles. Did David betray no symptom of satisfaction, on the removal of his most bitter enemy?

Mother. Exactly the reverse—he received the relation with an exclamation of horror. “How!” cried he, “wast thou not afraid to lift thy hand against the Lord's anointed? Thy blood be upon thy head, for thy mouth hath testified against thee;” and, turning to his servants, ordered the instant execution of the fawning regicide. Both he and his men rent their garments, and fasted and mourned for the disgrace of their country and the excision of the royal family.

But the death of Jonathan, his beloved and faithful friend, was lamented by David with the deepest sorrow.

His elegy, on this mournful occasion, is a noble effusion of tenderness for both father and son: "The beauty of Israel (said he) is slain upon thy high places. How are the mighty fallen! Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O! Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places! I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women!"

Saul, however, having been the sole cause of David's self-banishment, he now took leave of his hospitable entertainer, and, with his little colony of adherents, returned to Canaan, and was immediately crowned at Hebron, by the house of Judah, his own tribe, in the thirtieth year of his age. (B. C. 1056.)

The first recorded act of David's reign was a mark of respect to the memory of the late king. By a special messenger to Jabesh-gilead, he informed them that he was anointed king of Israel, and would certainly requite them for the kindness they had shown to their late lord and his sons.

But new troubles at once assailed the pious king. Ish-bosheth, a son of Saul, survived the ruin of his house. No sooner was David crowned, than Ish-bosheth was set up at Mahanaim, beyond the Jordan, in opposition, by Abner, the commander of Saul's army, and a near relation of his family. Many of the tribes supporting his claim, while that of Judah adhered faithfully to David, a civil war ensued, and the state was distracted some years between the contending parties. At length, Abner receiving an affront from his master, sent messengers to David, with an offer to bring about a general revolution in his favour. The acquisition of Abner was of prime consequence to the king, yet he required, as the passport even to an interview, that he should be accompanied by Michal, Saul's daughter,—at the same time she was formally demanded of Ish-bosheth

as the right of King David. The cause of the former, continually weakening, and now receiving a death-blow from the intrigues of Abner, he did not venture to refuse this act of justice, but took the princess "from her weeping husband," and sent her by the hand of Abner to the king. This letter of recommendation procured the ambassador and his train such distinction at court, as excited the jealousy of David's chiefs. Joab, especially, a man cruel and ambitious, having lost a brother by the sword of Abner, in a late skirmish, affected to consider the new favourite as a spy, and seized the opportunity of gratifying his own revenge, whilst he put an end, at once, to his growing consequence in the state, by assassinating him, with circumstances of base treachery, as he was departing from the city.

Catherine. These people seem to have had no idea of the atrocious guilt of murder: I hope it was punished in this instance, aggravated as it was by a breach of hospitality.

Mother. Their knowledge was less defective than their practice. David himself was probably induced to spare Joab, because both he and his brother, Abishai, were experienced soldiers, and very necessary to him in the unsettled state of his kingdom. He nevertheless declared his abhorrence of the deed, and buried Abner with funeral honours, himself following the bier as chief mourner, and fasting the whole day, because, as he said, "a great prince had fallen in Israel." Nor did he show the same lenity to Rechab and Baanah, two captains of Ish-bosheth, who, soon afterwards, perceiving the falling fortunes of their master, assassinated him while he reposed in the heat of the day, and brought his head as a tribute to his rival. David told them they had mistaken his character; for if he had not pardoned the man, who, to ingratiate himself, had violated the person of Saul, his implacable enemy,—“much less would he spare them, who had slain a righteous person, in his own house, upon his bed.”

The Israelites being now weary of intestine convulsions, and their minds prepared by the persuasive reasoning of Abner, no attempt was made to set up a successor to Ish-bosheth; but the elders of all the tribes repaired with one

accord to Hebron, where David had now reigned seven years and six months, and proclaimed him king over all Israel. (B. C. 1048.)

Charles. Poor David has had a turbulent passage from the sheep-cote to the throne. I hope he was now permitted to reign in peace.

Mother. David was a man of war from his youth all his days, with but few intervals of peace. His whole life illustrates our daily experience, that neither public honours nor private virtue will ensure unmingled happiness in this mutable world; and admonishes us to look for our reward only in that better state of things, "where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes."

Even now, when the hearts of all Israel were united in his favour, Jerusalem, which he chose for the seat of his government, was to be won by a contest with the natives, before he could enjoy the throne to which he had been called. Jerusalem, or Jebus, its original name, had been taken and burnt by the Israelites early in the time of the Judges. The natives again obtaining possession, had rebuilt the city, and held it until it was attacked by king David. Their resolute defence induced him to promise the chief command of the army to him who should signalize himself in the capture; and the valour of Joab obtained that reward. The citadel, which had been hitherto called *Zion*, he enlarged; and strengthened its fortifications. It was now called the city of David—here he fixed his residence, and Jerusalem continued to be the metropolis of the empire until the time of its destruction.

A few years of peace, perhaps five or six, succeeding to the conquest of Jerusalem, were employed in the organization of the government, both church and state. Ever mindful of his religious duties, one of the first cares of this illustrious prince was to revive and establish the public worship of the God of Israel, which had been neglected many years. To this end, after a consultation with the elders, he prepared a tabernacle for the reception of the "Ark of the Covenant," and then, attended by a vast multitude of the chief men, princes, priests, singers, musicians and other officers of the sanctuary, went to Kirjath-jearim.

where the ark had remained nearly fifty years, with but little interruption, and brought it up to Jerusalem. Hymns of praise, composed by the royal poet himself, for the occasion, accompanied by the sound of trumpets and cymbals, of psalteries, harps, and timbrels, were sung as the ark moved along, and when it was deposited in its place.—Sacrifices were then offered, and a general distribution of bread and wine, from the king to all his people, closed the solemn festival.

The accession of David to the throne of Israel was speedily acknowledged by congratulations from the neighbouring princes.—Amongst others, Hiram, king of Tyre, sent an embassy, and with it a valuable present of the fine cedars of Lebanon, and skilful workmen, to build for him a palace, which was immediately commenced. But when the stately structure was finished, David was struck with the disparity between his own splendid dwelling, and the humble tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts, who had raised him from obscurity to pre-eminence! “Shall I,” said he, “dwell in a house of cedar, whilst the Ark of God is encircled only with curtains?” Unaccustomed, however, in matters of importance, to act upon the suggestions of his own mind without a superior guide, he sent for Nathan, the prophet, and communicated his desire to erect a temple better suited to the glory which emanated from beneath the wings of the cherubim. The prophet at first encouraged him to go on with his design, but afterwards, when better instructed, informed him that that honour was denied unto him, who had been “a man of war,” and was reserved for his successor—a son who was yet to be born—“a man of peace,” with whom “the kingdom should be for ever established.”

The king submitted, without a murmur, to this decree, and repaired to the sanctuary, to render his heartfelt acknowledgments for the gracious promise with which it was accompanied.

Disappointed in the first object of his laudable ambition, David now looked around for other channels to receive his royal munificence. Inquiring particularly for the house of Saul, he found a son of his firm and early friend Jona-

than, who had lived unknown and unnoticed since the death of his father.—Mephibosheth, a child at the time of the late revolution, had been precipitately carried away by his nurse, and had lost the use of his limbs by a fall from her arms in the hurry of her flight.

Funny. The discovery of a child of Jonathan, would be most delightful to the king—no doubt he rejoiced in being able to protect him?

Mother. Nothing could have been more soothing to his tender recollection of Jonathan. The forlorn prince was immediately conducted to court, and treated like the children of the king. His father's estates were restored to him, and Ziba, a servant who had attended him in his adversity, was commanded to cultivate them for his master and himself.

From these pleasant occupations the warlike king was again summoned to the field. The restless enemies of Israel again appeared in arms. The Moabites, the Ammonites, the Syrians, and others, were engaged, and subdued, not now as heretofore, partially, but completely—their towns were garrisoned by Israelites—tributes were exacted—and at length the whole extent of that land which had been originally promised to the posterity of Abraham, was, according to the prophecy, brought under the dominion of David.

But the conquest of Edom was that which most contributed to the subsequent greatness of his empire; for he thereby became possessed of Elath and Ezion-geber, two ports on the Red Sea, which opened to him all the trade of the East, the source of his immense wealth.

Funny. I do not remember to have read of any trade carried on by David.

Mother. I am not surprised at your confession. It is a common thing to pass over circumstances of apparent insignificance, which, nevertheless, elucidate or confirm others of moment. The abundance of gold and silver in Jerusalem has been ridiculed by those who would not take the trouble to examine whence they came. They did not fall from the clouds on this favoured king and his illustrious son Solomon; but were imported from India, from

Persia, from Africa, and Arabia, by the Red Sea, to Ezion-geber and Elath, and this is believed to be the origin of the East India trade, which has been so immensely profitable to our merchants since the passage round the Cape of Good Hope was discovered.*

Hitherto we have seen this excellent man respectable for his virtues, and adhering to his duty against the strongest temptations. How painful it is, that candour requires us to exhibit the reverse of this picture! But the uses of history are perverted when partiality conceals the defects of those who make a conspicuous figure on its page.

The divine compositions of David will ever be the record of his unquestionable piety—and the general tenor of his life was remarkable for its rectitude. Yet David fell into aggravated sin; and the fall of such a man is an everlasting confirmation of that sacred truth, that “the heart is desperately wicked;” and should teach us “not to be high-minded, but fear.”

Against Syria, and Moab, and others, in the wars just mentioned, the king went in person, and returned with spoils of immense value, especially utensils of silver and gold, which were all dedicated to the decoration and service of the temple which his son was to build. He remained after these fatiguing exertions in Jerusalem, and sent Joab against the Ammonites.

In this fatal season of repose, while every thing was flourishing, at home and abroad, he fell violently in love with a very beautiful woman named Bath-sheba, the wife of one of his officers! Surrendering himself wholly to his passion, he wrote secretly to the general, commanding him to assign the most dangerous post to Uriah, the husband of Bath-sheba. No man was better qualified than the wily Joab to execute the cruel purpose of his master. The devoted Uriah soon fell by the sword of the enemy, and the fair Bath-sheba was publicly declared the wife of king David!

This shocking deed was the deep stain of David's life—

* See Prideaux, book i. p. 4.

yet he continued insensible for an incredible time. He was awakened, at length, by the prophet Nathan—who was commissioned to reprove him by seeming to lay before the chief magistrate, the complaint of a man who had been wronged by his neighbour.

“There were two men in one city,” said the prophet, “the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks, and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought, and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

“And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.”

This forcible appeal to his native sense of right and wrong, awakened the just indignation of the king—but his conscience still slept! “As the Lord liveth,” he hastily answered, “the man that hath done this thing shall surely die—and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” So quick-sighted are we to the faults of others, and so blinded to our own!

Completely subjected to the dominion of his passions, nothing less than the direct application of the case to himself would have produced conviction to the guilty king. “*Thou art the man*”—said the prophet—and the whole turpitude of the transaction stood before him, while the messenger of God pronounced the just judgment that awaited his crime! Pierced to the very soul, the humbled monarch breathed not a syllable in extenuation, but prostrate on the earth, he acknowledged his transgression with fasting and tears.

The fifty-first psalm in our translation, which he wrote on this sad occasion, is a lively transcript of his penitence,—the sacrifice of “a broken spirit, and a contrite heart!”

Catherine. I hope the penitence of David was accept-

ed without the infliction of a penalty, seeing how much he had suffered before he came to the throne.

Mother. That ought not to be desired. His sin was enormous, and his high example was dangerous to the morals of the nation. His pardon might be known only to himself; but as his crime had been notorious, it was proper that his punishment should be exemplary; and it came in that bitter form, which, of all others, human nature is least able to bear! "I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house." Accordingly, horrible immoralities were committed by his sons—one fell by the hand of another—and Absalom, the most engaging, the most beloved of them all, accomplished the climax of his father's afflictions by exciting a rebellion against him!

Catherine. Was it possible to excite a rebellion against a monarch so excellent, and so much beloved by his people?

Mother. The populace of every country are restless, and the Israelites, as you have seen, were exceedingly capricious. Their affections were too easily diverted from their venerable king to the aspiring prince, whose incomparably fine person was the idol of their imagination. The splendour of his equipage, unlike the modest demeanour of his brother, who conformed to the common custom of riding on mules, gratified their pride, whilst the condescension of his manners persuaded them that the base insinuations against the administration of his father, arose from a genuine interest in their welfare. All this too was aggravated by the circumstance that he had but lately been restored to the favour and presence of the king, from which his misconduct had banished him for several preceding years.

Having thus, by an imposing appearance, and deceitful caresses, prepared the way for the execution of his scheme, the rebel son obtained leave to repair to Hebron, under the pretext of performing a vow, which he had made during his exile in Syria. A small party of two hundred men, who, without any suspicion of his design, had attended him from Jerusalem, were soon swelled into a formidable army by additions from all the tribes, amongst whom his

emissaries had been employed to sow the seeds of discontent, and erect the standard of Absalom in Hebron.

It would be superfluous to dwell on the overwhelming shock which this blow gave to the confiding king and affectionate parent. Yet he was not wholly deserted—many of his faithful servants rallied round him, and declared their resolution to obey him alone. But David was not ignorant that this was the vial of wrath intimated by the prophet, and that submission to his punishment became him. He proposed, therefore, to his friends, that they should give way to the approaching tempest by retiring from the capital, and awaiting at a distance the returning favour of Providence.

Can imagination paint a more affecting picture than this sad event in David's life? A multitude of people, men, women, and children, abandoning their homes—the ministers of religion, priests, and levites, in white garments, bearing the awful depository of the covenant—and, in the midst, the weeping monarch, attended by his family, and his counsellors—flying from the hostility of a degenerate, yet beloved son!

Still more interesting was the scene when having passed the brook Cedron, murmuring softly through the vale which separates Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, he was obliged to consult his own safety by sending back several of his most valued friends, Zadok, and Abiathar, and others, to watch the progress of the conspiracy in the city. To afford a plausible pretext for dismissing the priests, he also sent back the Ark with this submissive reflection—"If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation."

The mournful procession then moving on, the affecting scene cannot be better described than it is by the historian. "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up; and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that went with him, covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up."

Catherine. The sacred historian has, in my opinion,

evinced his superlative judgment, by relating a scene so full of interest in the very simplest language. The figures of rhetoric would have weakened its effect. What a spot is here for the traveller in the Holy Land to stand, after a lapse of more than two thousand years, on this very mount where the king of Israel stood—now climbing the ascent beneath a weight of years and sorrow—now turning to breathe a silent prayer towards the sanctuary for his erring son!

Mother. Dr. Clarke seems to have felt all the enthusiasm, you imagine the scene might inspire. He has given us a most animated view of his impressions whilst he looked down on the venerable city from this eminence. "Abstracted," he says, "from every religious view, and considered solely as a subject for the most gifted genius in poetry, or in painting, it is perhaps impossible to select a theme more worthy the exercise of exalted talents. Every thing that is sublime and affecting, seems to be presented in the description of the procession or march of David, in his passage across the Kedron, and particularly in the moment when the Ark of the Covenant is sent back, and the aged monarch, having in vain entreated Ittai to leave him, begins to ascend the mountain, preceded by the various people said to form the van of the procession. Every wonderful association of natural and artificial features, of landscape, and of architecture, of splendid and diversified costume, of sacred pomp, and of unequalled pathos, dignify the affecting scene: here, a solemn train of mourners; there, the seers, the guardians, and companies of the Ark, men, women, children, warriors, statesmen, citizens, priests, levites, counsellors;—with all the circumstances of grandeur displayed by surrounding objects; by the sepulchres of the valley; by the lofty rocks, the towers, bulwarks, and palaces of Sion; by the magnificent perspective on every side; by the bold declivities and lofty summits of Mount Olivet; and finally by concentration of all that is great and striking in the central group distinguished by the presence of the afflicted monarch."

Yet, in this afflicting scene—in this most trying moment, the native generosity of David's temper did not forsake

him. Seeing amongst his followers a stranger named Ittai, who had but lately come into Jerusalem, he besought him not to involve himself in the misfortunes of a fallen king, but return to his dwelling, and enjoy the protection of the prosperous Absalom! But Ittai persisted in his fidelity, and refused to leave him. A little further on, a man of the house of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, assailed him with curses, and even threw stones at the sacred person of the king, insolently charging him with the blood of Saul, and of his sons! The enraged people would have torn him in pieces, but David bade them to forbear—"Behold," said he, "my son seeketh my life—how much more may this Benjamite do it!"

On the top of Mount Olivet, yet another wound was added—Ziba the steward of Mephibosheth, who came with a supply of bread and fruits, and wine, to the weary travellers, informed the king that his ungrateful master had embraced the party of the usurper!

By this time the unfeeling prince was received in Jerusalem with acclamations of "God save the king"—and had accepted the offered services of Hushai, one of the spies who had been sent back to give intelligence to David. Hushai being a very judicious man, was gladly taken into the privy council, and thereby enabled to inform his master that a numerous army was in pursuit of him, and therefore he could not remain in safety on the western side of Jordan. The river was accordingly passed, and David's little band encamped in a wilderness of Gilead. Here they received an abundant supply of all sorts of provisions from Barzillai, a man of immense wealth, and a zealous partizan of the house of David.

Compelled now to act in defence of his own life, of his kingdom, and of his people, the afflicted monarch reluctantly organized his forces into three divisions; appointing Joab, Ittai, and Abishai commanders, and determined to go in person to the field. But the unwillingness of his friends to endanger the person of their king, compelled him to abandon his purpose and remain behind in the city of Mahanaim. Reviewing them, therefore, with deep anxiety from the gate of the city as they passed out to

meet the hostile army,—he gave, in the hearing of all—one solemn charge at parting—to “deal gently for *his* sake with the young man, even with Absalom!”

The awful state of suspense in which the wretched father was left, was not of long continuance: the two armies soon met in the “wood of Ephraim,” and the loyalists were greatly victorious, although far inferior in numbers.

Charles. Ephraim, if I remember right, lay on the western side of Jordan; did the armies then recross the river before the engagement?

Mother. The tribe of Ephraim was, as you have said, located on the western side; but on the eastern, in that territory which had been given to the half tribe of Manasseh, was the place called the “Wood of Ephraim,” because, as some suppose, it was the place where two and forty thousand Ephraimites were slain in a civil war with the Gileadites, in the days of Jephthah. You will find the story in the twelfth chapter of Judges. Many of these subordinate incidents I omit in my summary, because they are not necessary to the connection of the whole, and I fear being tedious. Nor would I detain you at this eventful moment with a remark on the wood of Ephraim, but that we are led to look for some peculiarity in illustration of the expression that “the wood devoured more than the sword.”

Fanny. I am always glad to have an explanation of an ambiguous passage, yet this occurring in a place so interesting it is some tax upon my patience.

Mother. We need only suppose the wood of Ephraim to have been unusually close, and almost impenetrably entangled with low branches and underwood; so that the defeated Israelites, who might have escaped in the open plain, were there easily overtaken by the small number to whom Providence had awarded the victory. The unnatural prince himself became a most memorable example of the displeasure of Heaven against undutiful children. Attempting to elude the pursuers, his mule passed under the low boughs of a great oak, which caught his long and now dishevelled hair—the pride and the ornament of his

elegant person—whilst the mule, continuing her flight, left him unable to disengage himself. In this distressing situation he was presently discovered by a soldier of Joab's party, who, remembering the injunction of the father, went on with the tidings to his commander, expecting, no doubt, that Absalom would be immediately relieved from impending death. Joab, however, not only derided the man's asseveration that a thousand shekels of silver should not tempt him to violate the king's order—but hastened himself to the fatal spot, and, with his own hand, put an end to the life of the misguided Absalom! Yet, affecting to honour the blood-royal at the same time, he refused to send any intelligence to the city on that day, because "a son of the king had fallen!" The next day, however, two messengers were despatched with congratulations to the king on the suppression of the rebellion, and the quiet return of all who escaped from the sword. The unhappy father was found waiting, with unceasing solicitude, at the gate of the city. The cheerful salutation of "tidings my lord, the king, for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of them that rose up against thee," scarcely met his ear. "Is the young man Absalom safe?" was the first inquiry of his labouring soul. "The enemies of my lord, the king, and all that rise up to do thee hurt, *be* as that young man is!" conveyed the overwhelming answer. But here description must fail—the heart of a parent, only, can tell the effect! Weeping, and exclaiming—"O my son Absalom—O Absalom, my son, my son, would God, I had died for thee!"—he retired to the chamber over the gate, and gave himself up to unutterable anguish!

The party of the usurper completely subdued, Joab led his troops back to Mahanaim; but, hearing of the excessive grief of the king, and conscious of their neglect of his injunction, no trophies were displayed, but every man quietly stole into the city as if they had fled from a defeat. Respect and commiseration for their venerable monarch, suppressed every feeling of joy—no voice but that of sympathy was heard in the streets—whilst he continued shut up in his apartment regardless of every thing! The restoration of his crown was as nothing—the returning love

of his people was unavailing—Absalom, his dear, his lamented Absalom, alone absorbed every concern!

Fanny. Was it not unnatural, mother, that David should so deeply lament over a son who was killed in the very act of seeking his life? David, too, so full of pious resignation in many severe trials?

Mother. It was perfectly natural—for the criminality of the son, and the piety of the father, did but aggravate the sorrow of David. Religion may enable us to resign the most lovely and virtuous of our children; but to have one cut off in the commission of a sin, almost beyond the hope of mercy, is too much for human nature to endure! But I am saying what you, my children, cannot understand—a parent only can know the feelings of a parent! Joab, it is probable, was not a father, for we find he could not apologize for the amiable tenderness of the king, when he found the people beginning to murmur at the continued indulgence of his immoderate grief: but went boldly to his chamber and expostulated on the impolicy of his conduct. “The people and the princes,” said he, “might have perished; so that Absalom had been saved, you would have been satisfied! Come forth from this unreasonable seclusion, let the people see that you are not insensible to their interests, or ungrateful for their love, otherwise a more general disaffection will quickly prevail.”

By such arguments, harsh as they were at that all-subduing hour, the dejected monarch was gradually drawn from his exclusive devotion to one sad subject, and obliged again to participate in the turmoil of government.

The rebels, intimidated by the destruction of their army, of whom twenty thousand, together with their leader, had fallen in the field, intimated their willingness to return to the peaceable sway of their sovereign. David still waiting in Mahanaim for some decided expression of the public voice in his favour, and disappointed that the first overture had not come from his own tribe, sent messengers to Zadok, and Abiathar, the priests, to inquire, why they of his own house were less forward than others had shown themselves, to replace him on the throne; and to Amasa,

the chief captain of the rebels, he sent a full pardon, and an assurance that he should take the place of Joab, whose violent and intriguing disposition was incompatible with peace.

This affecting message produced an instant invitation to their king to return. Accordingly he left Mahanaim, and was received at the river by the whole tribe of Judah, who had marched out to conduct him home.—Shimei, the wretch who had so cruelly insulted him as he crossed the Mount of Olives, came also at the head of a thousand Benjamites, and, falling at his feet, entreated forgiveness; this was readily granted, although his friends protested against such unmerited clemency to a man who had even cursed the king in his bitter adversity. Barzillai, too, though now four-score years of age, conducted the king over Jordan, and was kindly invited to leave all his possessions in Gilead, and proceed to Jerusalem and live at the royal table the remainder of his life. But Barzillai, declining the generous offer on account of his great age and his desire to remain near the grave of his fathers, presented his son Chimham, who might receive any recompense which the king's liberality thought due to the services of his father. The son was received with the kindest assurances of favour, and the aged friends separated with expressions of affectionate friendship. Thus the king's journey commenced with the prospect of a happy restoration to his crown.

These auspicious omens were interrupted before the exiles had gone far from the river, by a multitude of the northern tribes, who met, and reproached the men of Judah with having repaired to the king without calling them to partake of the honour. Nor would they accept the apology, that the king being their relative, it became them to be foremost in demonstrations of duty. "We have ten parts in the king, although he be of your house," replied the malcontents, and an altercation ensued, which resulted in the abrupt departure of the assailants, headed by a man named Sheba, who, blowing a trumpet, proclaimed loudly, "We have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse."

Catherine. Then the recent wounds of civil war, not yet healed, were again laid open?

Mother. The activity of the king and his officers prevented that catastrophe; for an army was dispatched immediately after their arrival at Jerusalem, in pursuit of the insurgents. The city of Abel, in which they had fortified themselves, was besieged, and the surrender of Sheba the ringleader, was required to purchase the safety of its inhabitants. These terms were accepted, the head of the unfortunate Sheba was thrown over the wall, and peace was once more restored to Israel. But the glory of this result was tarnished by the treacherous murder of Amasa, the commander of the expedition, by Joab, whose spirit could not endure the punishment inflicted by the king, in depriving him of the chief command, and bestowing it on Amasa.

Fanny. What became of Mephibosheth, who, you told us, had ungratefully followed Absalom.

Mother. He appeared among the first to express his joy on the return of his benefactor; his infirmity alone had prevented his attendance, and afforded an opportunity to the false Ziba to slander him and obtain for himself the estates of his master. He had remained in solitude, without shaving his beard, or changing his clothes, during the whole absence of the king, and now gladly returned to his former place at the royal table.

Some reforms in the offices of state were made at this time, and Joab was replaced at the head of the army. That such a man should be continued in service, and hold an honourable post, seems wonderful to us; but his zeal in the cause of his master had been the apology for his most atrocious acts, and now that David was far advanced in life, the experience of Joab was particularly useful. For even at this late period his reign was not finished without new disturbances from the Philistines, the most restless of all the contiguous powers.

KINGS AND CHRONICLES.*

Mother. The determination, which had been signified to David, by Nathan the prophet, that he should not himself erect a temple to Jehovah, did not lessen his desire to glorify the Most High, nor abate his zealous promotion of every means for the advancement of his magnificent plan; but rather stimulated his industry in collecting materials to facilitate the labour of Solomon, his son and successor. By his trade to the East, and his numerous and successful wars, he had acquired an immense quantity of silver and gold, of brass, iron, and precious stones; and a prodigious quantity of all these materials was laid up for the contemplated building, and workmen were employed in preparing timber and stone.

From his youth, the life of David had been a scene of affliction and fatigue: under their corroding influence he became entirely debilitated in his sixtieth year, and unable any longer to appear in public; but his mental powers being yet unimpaired, his ministers attended in his chamber, and from his bed received his usual direction and advice.

In this state of affairs, Adonijah, the brother of Absalom, and now the eldest son of the king, incited a party, into which he had the address to draw even Joab and the priest Abiathar, to set him on the throne. Adonijah, like Absalom, had a fine form and insinuating manners: his father's fond indulgence had allowed him to imitate his ill-fated brother in the splendour of his retinue; and being now entitled, by primogeniture, to the succession, he might

* The books of Kings and Chronicles are here classed together, because they treat of the same period of history; one relating some things omitted in the other. The story is taken indiscriminately, from both. The Chronicles appear to have been compiled after the captivity, from ancient and authentic documents.

have thought it but a venial fault to put the crown on his head during the life of his declining parent. A great entertainment was accordingly prepared at Gihon, a place very near to Jerusalem, and all things were in readiness for the consummation of his scheme, when it was discovered by the prophet Nathan, and by him communicated to Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon. By his advice she repaired instantly to the king, and bowing herself to the ground, respectfully reminded him, that he had promised her upon his oath, that Solomon, her son, should reign. While they yet talked on the subject, Nathan came in to inform the king of the assemblage at Gihon, and the usurpation of Adonijah. Not a moment did he hesitate to confirm his promise with a solemn asseveration to the mother of Solomon; but seeing the cruel contests to which the kingdom was about to be exposed by the rivalry of the princes, he resolved to put the question at rest whilst he yet had the power. Calling, therefore, for Zadok the priest, he commanded him to set Solomon on the king's own mule, and, attended by the officers of state and a party of the military, to take him to Gihon, and there anoint him and proclaim him king over Israel.

The sound of the trumpets, and the shouts of "God save king Solomon," soon reached the ears of Adonijah and his party, and as quickly dispersed them: the usurper himself, taking refuge at the foot of the altar, laid hold of its horns, and refused to depart until the young king should assure him a pardon.

Fanny. I do not know what may be the policy of kings; but I shall certainly be glad to hear that the first royal act of Solomon was one of mercy to his brother.

Mother. He did pardon Adonijah, and moreover assured him of protection so long as he remained a peaceable subject. The faults of Joab and Abiathar were likewise passed over for the present.

Passing rapidly through the busy and tempestuous life of David, we have now arrived at its closing year. Although his bodily powers were exhausted, still the pious and the patriotic soul was alive to the glory of God and the welfare of Israel. His design to build the temple had

been published, and Solomon had been placed on the throne, according to the divine command; still his inexperience required instruction, and his youth demanded support. Wherefore, rising from his bed, the venerable monarch assembled the princes of Israel, the state officers, and all the principal men of the empire, and made an eloquent address, in which he told them of the ardent desire he had conceived "to build an house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant," but that he had been forbidden to take that honour to himself—and it now devolved upon Solomon, whom the Lord had chosen to succeed him in the kingdom—that he had nevertheless provided abundance of materials for the work, but that it was an arduous and magnificent undertaking; and seeing that the Lord their God had subdued all their enemies, and blessed them with tranquillity on every hand, he commanded them to improve the time diligently, and with heart and hand to assist their young and inexperienced king in his pious labour. Then turning to his son, he beautifully exhorts him: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou *the God of thy father*, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee—but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it." He then gave him a comprehensive description of the edifice, which he said had been communicated *by the Spirit* to him—delivered to him an immense quantity of silver and gold (of which, a sum exceeding seventy millions of our dollars, was from his private purse), for the decorations of the house, and for a vast variety of utensils to be used in their ceremonious service; and lastly, he instructed him in the administration of the Temple worship, by the Levites, whom he divided into twenty-four courses, including priests, levites, singers, musicians and porters—to serve in rotation. Then blessing the people with thanksgiving and prayers, for them and their monarch, the grand audience concluded. The day following, a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand sheep, were sacri-

ficed in burnt offerings, and king Solomon was gladly accepted by all the people of Israel.

Amongst the latest advice which David gave to his successor, we find him gratefully remembering the worthy Barzillai, and enjoining on Solomon to cherish and honour the sons of his father's benefactor: whilst he warned him that Shimei was a dangerous man—but inasmuch as his life had been guarantied by the promise of David—that promise must yet be respected; but as Joab, who had slain Absalom, contrary to the command of the king, and most treacherously put to death two princes of Israel, "who were better than himself," had obtained no such exemption, he ought to suffer the punishment due to his aggravated crimes.

Soon after these regulations were finished, David, the great king of Israel, "died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honour," says his historian—having obtained the high designation of "a man after God's own heart," and leaving, in a life of seventy years—forty of which he had reigned—a volume of instructions to posterity, both in his writings and his actions.* (B. C. 1015.)

Catherine. The whole life of David is indeed interesting, but I am at a loss to know how he who was far from being perfect, could be called a "man after God's own heart."

Mother. These words have abundantly provoked the derision of infidels, who choose to apply to them a meaning which some of their number at least, are aware, they were never intended to convey. They are analogous to those which I lately explained to you. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him"—that is, enabled him to perform the duty required at the time. In like manner, it was the *Heart* or the *Will* of God, that a man should be invested

* The history of David, to the death of Samuel, is believed to have been written by that eminent eye-witness of his actions. From that period it was probably continued by Gad or Nathan, both contemporary. The prophets, in the several ages of the Jewish church, certainly wrote some annals of their own times:—from these, the canon of scripture was finally settled by Ezra and the Sanhedrim, or grand Jewish council.

with royal authority, from whom, in a lineal descent, the Messiah should come—that in his reign, the whole country, “from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates,” which had been promised to the posterity of Abraham, should be subdued; and the civil and ecclesiastical government of the Israelites reduced to a regular and permanent form. Now, for all these purposes, David was qualified by his wisdom, his valour, and his eminent piety. His character is not without blemishes, and these are not extenuated by his analist; but his integrity, his meekness, his benevolence, and, above all, his activity in the cause of religion, and his faithful adherence to one God, in the midst of the most debasing idolatry, into which the chiefs of his nation, both before and after him, unhappily fell, render him worthy of the sublime destiny to which he was called. His deep penitence and self-abasement for his sins—his disinterested loyalty to Saul, whose family he knew to be set aside in his favour; and his moderation in prosperity—devoting the great riches he had acquired in his wars, to the service of the divine Giver—are the indubitable evidences of a noble disposition. His inimitable compositions are the transcript of a genius, deep, fervid and comprehensive—they are the genuine effusions of a pious soul, sometimes bowed down by the heavy stroke of affliction—sometimes transported with joyful gratitude for some communication of divine favour, some unexpected deliverance, or unmerited success. They are still applicable to the ever-varying circumstances of our mutable state, and will ever remain the enjoyment and consolation of every saint whilst the world endures.

Catherine. Yet the curses which he invokes on his enemies, are not like the breathings of a saint—how do you reconcile such expressions with the character of a pious man?

Mother. As the whole life of David exhibits a mild and forgiving disposition, we are warranted in saying, that the expressions to which you allude are not imprecations on his enemies: But as he was a prophet—“the Spirit of the Lord,” says he, “spake by me, and his word was in my tongue”—they may be understood as denunciations of God’s wrath upon such men as he describes.

Charles. I am glad to hear it. Your exposition is a relief to me—for I have often thought with pain of this vindictive trait in David's character—so very inconsistent with his general piety. Was he the author of all the Psalms?

Mother. Let your sister recite to us a versification she has attempted of the hundred and thirty-seventh psalm, and you will find your question answered.

Catherine.

PSALM 137.

1. Far from the land that gave us birth,
The captives of a heathen king;
Shall we give up one hour to mirth?
Shall we the songs of Zion sing?
2. Sing us a song—our masters say,
While sad and silent we remain:
Our weeping hearts reject the lay,
Our tongues refuse the sacred strain.
3. No—rather let our harps, unstrung,
Our harps, unus'd to mortal themes,
Upon the willow boughs be hung,
That droop o'er cruel Babel's streams!
4. O CANAAN! land of high behest!
The light of hope still beams on thee!
If I forget thy *promis'd rest*,
Then let my right hand palsied be!
5. If I forget thy olive bowers,
Thy vine-girt hills—thy daughters slain—
Thy holy temple's prostrate towers—
My tongue then ever dumb remain!
6. O Babylon! who raz'd our walls,
Who mock'd us in our days of woe;
Our ruin'd state for vengeance calls,
And thou, in turn, shalt be laid low!

Mother. Here you see the bard is a captive in Babylon, while his native land was in ruins—and that land was Canaan. David never saw Babylon, nor was his country laid waste by a conqueror until ages after his death—con-

sequently this ode is not his. The book of Psalms is the work of many hands, and was composed in different times and circumstances of the Jewish church, even ages apart. They illustrate the Jewish history. Some of these beautiful hymns are of a date as early as the days of Moses, of Deborah, and of Hannah, the mother of Samuel; and some are as late as the Babylonian captivity. Some are the composition of Asaph, a distinguished Levite, and chief of the choir which David appointed, and organised for the public worship of the Temple; and many are anonymous. Something more than one-third are inscribed with the name of the royal prophet. These are evidently connected with the various events of his life, both adverse and prosperous. But the whole collection has received the title of the psalms of David, most probably because he set them to music, and directed their use in the temple service. In some ancient manuscripts, it is called the Psalter, from the Psaltery, one of the instruments which accompanied the singers.

“The book of psalms presents every possible variety of Hebrew poetry. They may all indeed be termed poems of the lyric kind, that is, adapted to music, but with great variety in the style of composition. Thus some are simply odes. An ode is a dignified sort of song, narrative of the facts, either of public history, or of private life, in a highly adorned and figurative style. But the figure in the psalms is that which is peculiar to the Hebrew language, in which the figure gives its meaning with as much perspicuity as the plainest speech. Others, again, are ethic, or didactic, delivering grave maxims of life, or the precepts of religion, in solemn, but for the most part, simple strains. To this class we may refer the hundred and nineteenth, and the other alphabetical psalms, which are so called because the initial letters of each line or stanza followed the order of the alphabet. Nearly one-seventh part of the psalms are elegiac, or pathetic compositions on mournful subjects. Some are enigmatic, delivering the doctrines of religion in enigmatic sentences contrived to strike the imagination forcibly, and yet easily to be understood; while a few may be referred to the class of Idyls, or short

pastoral poems. But the greater part, according to bishop Horsley, is a sort of dramatic ode, consisting of dialogue between certain persons, sustaining certain characters.”*

“Not only do they breathe through every part a divine spirit of eloquence, but they contain numberless illustrious prophecies, that were remarkably accomplished, and that are frequently appealed to by the evangelical writers.” “David, in the spirit of inspiration, uttered his oracles with the most lively and exact description. He expressed the whole scheme of man’s redemption, the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection and ascension of the Son of God, rather as a witness than a prophet.”† In the earlier ages, we are told, the book of psalms was much more the familiar companion of religious persons and families, than it is now; they committed them to memory; they sung them at their meals; “they enlivened their social hours, and softened the fatigues of business.” But the example of our Saviour and his apostles is the conclusive sanction for the singing of psalms in divine worship. Hence the Christian church has adopted the practice as a part of its worship, and “these sacred hymns are indeed admirably calculated for every purpose of devotion.”

Let us now return to our story, from which I have thought it proper to digress for a few moments, to give you some notion of the importance of the book of psalms—for an ample exposition, you will read the works of those eminent writers, who have thought them worthy of a separate commentary.‡

Scarcely had the good king David descended to the grave of his fathers, when the factious movements of Adonijah forfeited the conditional protection which Solomon had engaged, and made it expedient to sacrifice his life to the tranquillity of the kingdom; as well as to depose Abiathar,

* “Introduction to the critical study and knowledge of the holy Scriptures;” a very extensive and excellent work, by Thomas Hartwell Horne, London.

† Gray’s Key to the Old Testament, &c.

‡ Horsley, Gray, Horne, and others.

his confederate, from the priesthood, and banish him to his private estate in the city of Anathoth, whence you will remember he had escaped to David on the inhuman butchery of the priests by Saul. Joab, also in the conspiracy, hearing of these decided measures, became alarmed for his own safety, and, conscious how often he had deserved the heaviest penalty of the law, betook himself to the horns of the altar for refuge. Resolving to avail himself of the sanctity of the place, and refusing to come forth at the command of the king, he was there put to death, that the guilt of his crimes, especially the murder of two innocent men, might be averted from the house of Solomon, and the nation of Israel.* Shimei, the noted rebel, was then called before the king, and commanded to build himself an house in Jerusalem, and confine himself to that city the remainder of his life—which should certainly be taken on the day that he should pass the brook Kidron. Benaiah, an officer of great conduct, a faithful servant of David, who had hitherto commanded the little army which had resorted to him in his exile, was promoted to the chief command in the place of Joab, and Zadok was made high-priest in the room of Abiathar.

Every threatening cloud now dispersed, and the sunshine of harmony at home, and peace abroad, beaming auspiciously on the head of Solomon, no impediment stood in the way of commencing his great work. But before he began, we observe, he collected all the principal people of Israel, and went up to “the high place” at Gibeon, and offered a thousand burnt offerings.

Charles. What do you mean by “the high place” at Gibeon?

* No opportunity ought to be neglected in our degenerate day—however insignificant the monitor—when the most atrocious of all crimes, that of murder, not only escapes the notice of the laws, but is beheld without horror—defended by argument—and even dignified with the name of *honourable* satisfaction—of reiterating the remark, that the *Supreme* lawgiver admitted of *no satisfaction* for the life of a *murderer*; but allowed in his case, even the sacred altar to be violated, should he presumptuously seek refuge in that place. See *Exod. xxi. 14*, and *Numbers, xxxv, 30, 31*.

Mother. All the heathen nations building their altars on elevated grounds, the Hebrews early fell into the same practice—hence the altars of both were often denominated “their high places.”

Catherine. This offering of Solomon brings other instances of similar irregularity to my recollection. If the altar before the ark was the only legal place of offering, how were they justified in sacrificing in Gibeon, or in any other place?

Mother. When David brought the ark to Jerusalem, he prepared a temporary habitation to receive it—the tabernacle, with the altar, being left at Gibeon with Zadok, and other priests to attend the ministration, it was then lawful to sacrifice in both places. In other instances, where the law appears to you to have been violated, you will find a special command to have been given for offering in the specified place. Whilst the ark was at Shiloh, on several occasions the people were assembled at Mizpeh to “consult the Lord,” which was to be done by the priest presenting himself before the mercy-seat, with the Urim and the Thummim on his breast. At Mizpeh, the people might, perhaps, assemble more conveniently than at Shiloh, which, being in view from the former, the priest might readily communicate between them. Thus you see when the Scriptures are examined, they will not fail to remove every fancied objection.

That the sacrifices of Solomon at Gibeon were accepted, is demonstrated by the extraordinary favour he received at that place. The Majesty of Heaven appeared before him in a dream, and asked what should be given to him. “Give me,” replied the modest prince, “wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for thou hast made me king over a people, like the dust of the earth in multitude.” “Because thou hast not asked riches or honour”—replied the celestial vision—“nor the life of thine enemies, nor long life for thyself, behold—wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like. And if

thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

The subsequent display of Solomon's transcendent powers, evinced the ratification of this promise of divine illumination. He was not much above twenty years of age at this time, yet the uncommon sagacity he displayed in the decision of a cause which came before him in the beginning of his reign, excited the admiration of the public, and laid the foundation of the title he acquired—that of the wisest of men!

Two women living in the same house, were the mothers of two infant boys of nearly the same age. They came before Solomon, one accusing the other in these terms: "This woman's child died in the night, because she overlaid it: and she arose at midnight, and took my son, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom—but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son." This charge was denied by the guilty mother; and each party refused to relinquish the living child. Solomon, well knowing that maternal feeling would at once decide the question, proposed to settle the claim by dividing the living child between them—the impostor acquiesced! but the mother, in an agony of horror, exclaimed, "O my Lord, give her the living child, and in nowise slay it!" "Give *her* the living child," said the wise king, pointing to the agitated mother, "and in nowise slay it"; *she* is the mother thereof."

Shimei, the noted reviler of David, observed the terms of his pardon about three years; at the end of that time, he pursued some runaway servants to Gath, and returned again to Jerusalem, where he was immediately put to death; having foolishly incurred the execution of a sentence, which he had himself sanctioned.

King Solomon, now the undisputed monarch of his own powerful realm, and the master of tributary kings, made several alliances with others, particularly the king of Egypt, whose daughter he married, and with Hiram, king of Tyre, the friend of his father David, who supplied him with timber and with skilful artizans for the building of the temple.

The dominions of Solomon contained no such timber as the cedar and cypress of Lebanon. He therefore contracted with Hiram for trees to be hewn in the mountains, and floated by sea to Joppa,* the nearest port to Jerusalem. More than one hundred and seventy thousand labourers, the subjects of the two kings, were employed in this immense work, all of whom were provisioned by Solomon. Another numerous party quarried, squared, and polished the stones for the walls, which were thus exquisitely finished, in obedience to a divine command, that no hammer or tool of iron should be heard in the erection of the building.

All things being prepared, the foundation of the temple was laid in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon, and the four hundred and eighth year after the exodus from Egypt.

Charles. Was it placed in the city of Jerusalem?

Mother. It was within the city on that consecrated eminence, where the patriarch Abram had prepared to offer up his son Isaac, eight hundred years before. It was called indifferently Mount Moriah, or Mount Zion.

In seven years, the temple of Solomon was finished, and stood an edifice of stupendous magnificence. The tabernacle of the sanctuary was the model of its construction. It was superbly adorned with precious stones, with sculptured wood, and silver and gold. The immense weight of the latter, which is said to have been expended on every part of the house, is almost incredible. With its lofty porticoes, its courts, and its offices for the accommodation of the worshippers, the Levites, the guards, and other inferior officers, it covered half a mile in circumference.†

When this wonderful assemblage of beauty and splendour was completed, the solemn dedication of it followed,

* Now called Jaffa.

† The Levites, in number thirty-eight thousand, were divided into twenty-four classes, each class serving a week in rotation; whilst they were upon duty, they were lodged in the temple. For a particular description of the temple, see Prideaux's *Connexion of the Old and New Testaments*, vol. i. book 3.

and perhaps the human eye never beheld a grander spectacle. In the midst of a multitude of people, besides the princes, the elders, and the chiefs of all Israel, the priests brought in the ark of the covenant, and deposited it in the Holy of Holies, whilst the Levites, arrayed in white linen garments, stood beside the altar, and one hundred and twenty priests sounded their trumpets in unison with a full chorus of cymbals, of psalteries, of harps, and vocal performers, singing praises and thanksgivings to the Lord. "For he is good—for his mercy endureth forever." At this impressive moment, *the bright cloud* descended to the mercy-seat, and filled the court with such resplendent light that the priests were compelled to retire. Yet, the grand exhibition was not finished; the pious prince himself now ascended a brazen scaffold, which he had ordered for this purpose, and, spreading forth his hands to heaven, whilst he knelt in the midst of his people, he poured out the devotion and gratitude of his soul—beseeching the Omnipotent to accept the offering he was making, and answer the supplication which should ascend from the holy walls of his dwelling. There cannot be a nobler piece of composition than this fine dedicatory prayer of Solomon.

When he ceased speaking, fire descended from heaven on the altar where the sacrifices had been previously prepared, as it had done when the first offerings were made in the sanctuary, and the splendour of divine glory illuminated the whole temple! The astonished people, overpowered by awe, prostrated themselves on the earth, repeating, in deep reverence, "for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever!"

Another demonstration of divine favour was bestowed upon the king of Israel. When the sacrifices and feasts of the dedication, which lasted fourteen days, and seem to have been attended by a great proportion of the whole nation, were concluded—the God of Abraham again appeared by night, to him, and graciously declared his acceptance of the prayers that should arise from the dwelling he had chosen; that even in the days of calamity, which the sins of his people might thereafter bring upon this land, their

penitent supplications from that hallowed place should turn away his just wrath, and procure them relief!

This whole account of the building and dedication of the temple is remarkably beautiful, and perhaps the eloquence of Solomon's prayer is not surpassed by any portion of scripture. A young monarch, surrounded by all the magnificence of the East, and by hundreds and thousands of his admiring subjects, himself assuming the office of the priest, kneeling in humble adoration before the Majesty of heaven, is a most interesting spectacle, and peculiarly fitted to make us feel the insignificance of man! Nor can I omit the opportunity it offers, particularly to remark the prophetic sentence which concludes the gracious answer it obtained, because its wonderful fulfilment, even to the very letter, is an everlasting testimony to the truth of the narrative. "But if," said the Lord, "ye turn away, and forsake my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them: and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, *will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations.* And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it, so that he shall say, 'why hath the Lord done thus?' and it shall be answered, 'Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them, therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them!'"

Fanny. Solomon himself, at least, it might be hoped, would scarcely apostatize in the face of this awful warning.

Mother. Indeed, my dear, it is humiliating to human nature to confess that he did—his whole reign was the reign of peace and prosperity—and prosperity corrupted his excellent heart! Respected, feared, and caressed by his subjects, his allies, and his neighbours, he became powerful beyond all other potentates upon earth. Jerusalem was adorned with stately palaces for himself, and for his queen; his throne was of ivory and pure gold, and all

the furniture of his table was of gold. In his armoury were two hundred targets, and three hundred shields of beaten gold. Presents of immense value poured in from the neighbouring kings, and his merchant ships, from Ophir and other places, supplied him with all the spices of Arabia, and the wealth of the East. Not distracted, like his father, by wars, he had leisure to strengthen his empire. Going in person to Elath and Ezion-geber, now called Berenice, he fortified those ports, and built a navy ; by which judicious measures, the trade from the Red Sea became so profitable, that the abundance of gold in Jerusalem, reduced the comparative value of silver to little account in his glorious days. The queen of Sheba came herself with a great train, not only to bring him presents of precious metals, and to do homage to the celebrated Solomon, but to behold the magnificence, and to listen to the wisdom that were now blazoned through the world. "Happy," cried she, when she had seen all these things, and felt herself humbled in his presence—"Happy are thy servants who stand continually before thee. It was a true report which I heard in mine own land, yet I believed not the words : behold, the half was not told me ; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard !"

Fanny. Where was Sheba, the country of this queen ?

Mother. I cannot tell you with certainty. As she is said to come from "the South"—she may have reigned in Abyssinia or Arabia—these being the most southerly then known. Both these countries contained, or might easily have procured the spices, gold, and precious stones, she is said to have presented to Solomon.

Solomon was, during the greater part of his reign, a righteous king, and a strict observer of the laws and statutes of Moses. But, towards the close of his life, perverted by his alliances with the heathens, he married their daughters, and became the victim of their arts. For them he dishonoured his high character, by erecting altars to their deities, and burning incense in their temples.

These flagrant defections could not go unnoticed in a nation the peculiar care of the Deity ; whose extraordinary providence was ever perceived in sensible manifesta-

tions of his approbation of their national virtue, and visible punishment of their apostacy. Accordingly the old enemies of Israel, the Edomites, and the Syrians, became troublesome in the latter years of Solomon. But, in his own house, the most formidable enemy arose in Jeroboam, a man of considerable note amongst his subjects, whose conspicuous abilities had obtained him a post of honour under the government.

A prophet, named Abijah, who is now first mentioned, was privately sent to Jeroboam, to inform him, in the symbolical manner of the ancients, by rending his mantle into twelve pieces, and putting ten into the hand of the latter, that thus should the kingdom be rent for the sin of Solomon; ten parts should be given to Jeroboam, whilst two should remain with the house of Solomon, for the sake of Jerusalem, the seat of the temple, and for the sake of David his father. By what means this sentence was revealed to the king we are not informed, but his menacing aspect, from that time, towards Jeroboam, obliged him to retire into Egypt, where he remained during Solomon's life, which terminated in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and the fortieth of his reign.

Catherine. Who now shall hope to persevere in virtue, if a prince so indulged with every worldly gratification, and so highly endowed with intellectual accomplishments, did not "retain his integrity?"

Mother. Yet, let us not be discouraged, but rather profit by the result of his experience, and follow his own beautiful precept: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." And there is reason to believe that the aberrations of this illustrious prince, though great, were but transient, for his book of Ecclesiastes, emphatically styled "The Preacher," written in the latter part of his life, contains the abundant confession, that the pomp and the pleasures he had pursued, were but vanity! The better part of his life was spent in study, as he tells us, "concerning all things that are done under heaven," and he has left us, on record, the transcript of a mind exer-

cised in the contemplation of man, in all his various relations and circumstances. His "Proverbs," a part of which only has reached us, are the inexhaustible mine whence the boasted philosophy of the world has derived all its wealth. His temple and his palaces are crumbled into dust, and Jerusalem has fulfilled the prophecy, and become the by-word of the traveller; but his transcendent wisdom has erected an edifice which shall endure until earthly palaces are no more!

Catherine. His book called Solomon's Song, is not so happy. Indeed, I do not pretend to discover its use.

Mother. It is believed to be a prophetic allusion to the union of Christ and his Church. It is altogether in the metaphorical style of the East, and, therefore, not understood by common readers. Yet much of its imagery is elegant, and obvious; though not so instructive as the plainer parts of Scripture.

On the death of Solomon, the people of Israel, with one accord, set the crown on the head of his son Rehoboam. (B. C. 975.) But, notwithstanding the flourishing state of the kingdom in the late brilliant reign, discontents had arisen, which the accession of a new king seemed to present a favourable opportunity of removing. Jeroboam, who still resided in Egypt, was accordingly invited to return, and contribute his talents to the meditated plan of reform. Headed by this formidable rival, their complaints soon reached the throne, and three days were required by the prince to consider their petition. The old counsellors of his father were now consulted, and readily gave their opinion, that his own interest would be promoted by compliance. But the inclinations of the king were opposed to the sage experience of years, and younger statesmen were called in to confirm them. Directed only by the pride of newly acquired power, these tyros in the science of government saw no way so likely to secure the obedience of the people, as that of increasing, instead of diminishing their taxes. This then was the measure adopted; and the ungracious answer, "my hand shall be heavier than my father's," produced an immediate revolt. Jeroboam, and the malcontents, without further deliberation, raised the

standard of rebellion, proclaiming aloud, in the words of the insurgent Sheba, "What portion have we in David?—neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse;—to your tents, O Israel!—now see to thine own house, David!"

The two tribes of Benjamin and Judah, alone, adhered to their lawful monarch, whilst all the other ten united against them, and declared Jeroboam their sovereign. Thus were the Israelites divided into two separate states, and, thenceforth, denominated—the kingdom of Israel, and the kingdom of Judah.

Fanny. Then the rending of the prophet's garment, was already realized, and by means the most perfectly natural in the common course of affairs?

Mother. The affairs of the Israelites were generally conducted in that manner, although an extraordinary providence still directed them, nor had miracles yet ceased.

Charles. Did Rehoboam submit to the loss of his subjects without an effort to recover them?

Mother. No. He assembled an army of an hundred and eighty thousand men to reduce the revolted tribes; but he relinquished the pursuit at the command of a prophet, who was sent to forbid his opposition to the execution of the divine decree.

Less attentive was Jeroboam to the will of the Most High. Notwithstanding he had been told that the ten tribes were taken from Solomon, because of his defection from the worship of *one only God*, and that they should remain with the house to which they were transferred only so long as it continued faithful to the constitution; yet diffident of a title so substantial, and choosing rather to confide in his own devices, he fell into the very sin, for which the kingdom had been divided.

Although the ten tribes had revolted from the house of David, it was not their intention to depart from the religion of their fathers. Jerusalem was the place where alone its holy mysteries might be celebrated, and thither the subjects of Jeroboam must repair three times in every year: this necessity was full of danger to the new king. The glories of the holy city might revive the affections of his people for the pious founders of the temple; and the union

with their brethren at the solemn feasts, might excite some regret for their rash separation. To prevent these serious consequences, after having repaired Shechem, the city which Abimelech had destroyed in the days of Gideon, and fixed his court at Tirzah, near to Shechem, Jeroboam set up two golden calves, the one at Bethel, and the other at Dan, the two extremities of his kingdom, and proclaimed them "the gods of Israel which brought them out of Egypt!" Altars were erected for their service—priests from the lowest orders of the people were appointed, instead of the consecrated Levites—who had all perhaps left his territories and gone down into Judah—and sacred festivals were ordained, at seasons differing from those selected by the Mosaic Law.

Funny. I suppose they derived their propensity to worship a calf from the Egyptians, who stupidly worshipped an ox.

Mother. No doubt it was so, since we find the first idol, which their ancestors erected when they came out of Egypt, was in that form. They were then punished by a miracle, and now another reproved their impiety, and was accompanied by one of the most remarkable prophecies recorded in sacred writ (B. C. 975). Whilst Jeroboam sacrilegiously burnt incense on the altar at Bethel, a prophet from Judah appeared before him, and, in these awful words, denounced the vengeance of the offended Deity: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, *Josiah* by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. And this is the sign which the Lord hath spoken: Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." The insolent monarch, now lost in the maze of his destructive ambition, instantly put forth his own hand to seize the bold monitor—when, to the astonishment of the spectators, it was palsied in the attempt—and, at the same moment, the altar, dividing in the midst, "the ashes were poured out."

The power and veracity of Jehovah were now acknowledged, and his messenger implored to intercede for the

restoration of the king's hand—but, although the mercy was accorded, Jereboam neither repented of his sin, nor returned to his duty. He evidently knew better than to put any confidence in his graven images, or his unhallowed priesthood; for when a favourite child soon afterwards fell sick, and he required consolation, he sent his wife in disguise to Shiloh to consult Abijah, the prophet, who being previously informed of the quality of his visitor, was commanded to take this opportunity of informing the reprobate king, not only that his child would die of this sickness, but that he alone, of all his house, should die a natural death—"because some good was found in him;" but for the ingratitude of Jeroboam, and the wickedness of his family, they should be cut off, every soul, by violent hands!

As for the king of Judah, although he seemed to show a good disposition, by acquiescing in the determination of the Supreme Governor of Israel, to deprive him of a large proportion of his dominions, yet his allegiance continued but three years, after which, during a reign of seventeen, the worship of images prevailed throughout Judah.

These monstrous transgressions were visited by an invasion from Shishak, king of Egypt, who came with an immense army, took several of the strong cities of Judah, and plundered both the palace and the temple of Jerusalem of the splendid furniture with which Solomon had enriched them. Further punishment was suspended, on their repentance, but they became tributary to Egypt. Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, having a martial disposition, made a spirited effort, in his short reign of three years, to bring back the Israelites to the house of David, and although disappointed in his ultimate design, some of their best cities were reduced, and five hundred thousand of their chosen troops fell in battle. Asa, his successor, pursued a more promising way to the welfare of the state, by forbidding the abominable rites of the heathens to be seen in any part of his dominions, and resolutely destroying every symbol of their superstitions: not even sparing his own mother, who refused to concur in the pious work; but cutting her idol in pieces, with more than common marks of indigna-

tion, he deposed her from the royal station she held, that none of inferior note might hope to disobey with impunity.

Fanny. Do you think, mother, that a king is to be commended for punishing his own parent?

Mother. A king of Israel had no power to indulge in, or to pardon disobedience to the laws of Moses, in any individual. The sacred record does not condemn his conduct to his mother. It says, "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God." But this is not to be understood of all his actions throughout a reign of forty-one years; for, in the latter part of it, he neglected his duty and oppressed his subjects. Perhaps, his mind had become feeble: he was old, and a very severe distemper had afflicted the three last years of his life. Asa is said to have been "laid in his sepulchre with sweet odours, and divers kind of spices," and a "great burning" to have been made "for him." Whether embalming, in the manner of the Egyptians, is here meant, we cannot say; it is more probable that these "odours" were used to relieve the attendants on his funeral, from the offensive smell which disease had given to the body: because we do not read that the Israelites embalmed the bodies of their most eminent kings, in any instance, unless this be one.

Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, had the wisdom to take the most effectual measures to confirm the reformation his father had commenced—that of removing the ignorance of the people. So early as the third year of his reign, and while he was busily engaged in repairing and garrisoning his cities—he sent out missionaries with the book of the law in their hand, to instruct the Israelites in the knowledge of their duty. Nor did he rest here, but went himself throughout Judah, exhorting the judges, by every honourable and religious consideration, to be firm in the impartial administration of justice. His kingdom, of course, was highly prosperous, during his whole reign. The adjacent nations feared him, and brought their presents and their tribute, so that he became exceedingly rich. Yet he too erred: for he united with the degenerate king of Israel, in building a navy at Ezion-geber to trade to

the wealthy ports of Tarshish and Ophir for gold,—this fault was punished by the destruction of all the ships in a storm.

The history of the Israelites from the revolt of Jeroboam, is a record of alternate crime and calamity. Though repulsive, it is full of instruction, because it marks the steps by which they travelled to their own destruction. Continually embroiled with their neighbours, and with the sister state of Judah, the story is somewhat intricate; I shall not, therefore, be very particular in the detail, but endeavour to lead you through the most prominent and interesting events, to the natural result of their apostacy—the fulfilment of the prophecies against them.

The royal line of Israel, as contra-distinguished from that of Judah, did not produce one righteous prince; each plunged more deeply than his predecessor in vices the most inveterate!

Catherine. In such a state of things, were they not wholly abandoned by the great Supreme, whom they thus ungratefully deserted?

Mother. Though God is just, my dear, he is long-suffering. He bore long with his apostate children before he cast them off—visiting them with threatening and exhortation by his prophets, and deferring their final sentence whilst there appeared the smallest prospect of their return; for there were yet faithful individuals in the reprobate land; and for their sake occasional mercies were bestowed. The celebrated prophets Elijah, and Elisha, were commissioned to this division of Israel, and performed their miracles amongst them!

Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, succeeded his father in the throne of Israel, and following his evil example, was slain by Baasha, a man of Issachar, who put the crown on his own head, and afterwards fulfilled the judgment that had been pronounced against the house of Jeroboam, by putting them to death!

These atrocities, however, did not secure the succession to his own family; for his wickedness was so offensive to heaven, that a sentence of extermination, complete as had been that of Jeroboam, was passed upon him. His son

Elah was slain whilst he was revelling in his palace at Tirzah, by Zimri, a "captain of his chariots," and the whole house of Baasha was destroyed. When the news of Zimri's having cut off the royal house, and seated himself on the throne, reached the army, which at that time was besieging the Philistines in Gibbethon, they proclaimed Omri, one of their officers, king; and marched directly to attack the usurper in the capital. Zimri, finding his opponent too powerful, threw himself into the palace, and setting it on fire, there ended his short reign of seven days! The people, notwithstanding his death, divided in favour of the two pretending families; Omri's party prevailed; he himself reigned twelve years, and left the crown to his son Ahab, the most abandoned prince who had yet possessed it. Ahab's wife was the daughter of the king of Sidon, a woman remarkably insolent and cruel, by whose means, idolatry was extended to a degree beyond any former example.

In this melancholy state of Israel, the celebrated prophet Elijah, an inhabitant of Gilead, was commissioned to go to the wicked Ahab, and tell him, that neither rain nor dew should descend upon his dominions for three years, and that the inhabitants should be grievously afflicted by famine. To establish his own confidence in the divine origin of his mission, the prophet was directed to repair to the brook Cherith, which falls into the Jordan, where he should be fed miraculously by ravens! In this retirement he remained, receiving daily the promised sustentation, until, for want of rain, the brook was dried up. Another message then directed him to go to Zarephath, a city of Sidon, where a widow woman was prepared to entertain him. At the gate of Zarephath, Elijah found the poor widow he was seeking, collecting a few sticks to dress her last handful of meal!

Catherine. You seem to intimate that the Sidonians felt the effects of a famine, which was sent to punish Ahab; but they were not his subjects.

Mother. As it very naturally happens in the common course of events, that the innocent must suffer from the vices of their immoral associates, the Sidonians might have

been injured by the famine inflicted on a country adjacent, and with which they had much intercourse, had they themselves been a virtuous people; but it was far otherwise with Sidon.* Having a fine port on the Mediterranean, she had become wealthy by a flourishing trade with many nations; and vice, too frequently the offspring of excessive affluence, had contaminated every fibre of her body. Ahab had married the king's daughter, and, at her instigation, altars were erected in Samaria, to Baal, the god of the Sidonians, and a multitude of priests were maintained for the ministration of his profane rites. Thus obnoxious to divine wrath, for the guilt of their own sins, and their example and influence in corrupting Israel, we need not wonder that they should share in the distress of that unhappy country. And how severely it was felt, we may imagine from the answer of the widow of Zarephath to Elijah, when he applied to her for a little water and a morsel of bread: "As the Lord liveth," said she, "I have but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die!" But how was her despair converted into joy, when he directed her "to go first and prepare him a cake, and after that, make some for herself and son; for the barrel and the cruse should not fail until the Lord should send rain upon the earth!" Trusting in the gracious promise, she did as she was commanded, and received the reward of her faith, in a continued supply for herself—for her son—and for the prophet. A yet more affecting instance of divine favour confirmed her confidence in the God of Israel:—this son, her only child, fell sick and died, and was restored to the sorrowing mother on the prayer of Elijah.

Meanwhile, the famine raged with desolating sweep throughout the land of Ahab, and yet no symptom of penitence had invoked the mercy of the righteous Judge. The violent temper of the queen, on the contrary, exasperated into madness, and determined to reach Elijah, the innocent

* So called from Sidon, the grand-son of Ham, from whom descended the Canaanites.

predicter of the calamity, directed her servants to destroy all the prophets in Israel. But, happily for them, Obadiah, the governor of the royal household, was amongst a few who, in the worst of times, remained untainted by the prevailing corruptions,—and he contrived to preserve the lives of many, by concealing them in caves, and secretly sustaining them with bread and water.

Fanny. Your words, mother, would imply a considerable number of these inspired messengers; but I do not remember to have read of many at any one period.

Mother. The term, here and in other places of Scripture, is to be understood of the disciples of the more eminent prophets; or, the pupils of those seminaries that were founded by Samuel. They appear to have lived together in societies, retired in some measure from the world, not wholly exempted from labour, but chiefly devoting themselves to the study of the sacred books, and the instruction of the public. By exterminating the whole body, the queen would not only be revenged on the principal object of her malice, but would remove an impediment to the universal adoption of her vile religion. A well educated and active ministry must ever be a powerful restraint upon vice.

Elijah, however, eluded the search of Jezebel, and, at the conclusion of the appointed three years, was directed to show himself openly to the king—to foretel an approaching rain, and, by working a miracle in his presence, and in the presence of the people, to convince them of the fallacy of their lying oracles, for whom they had abandoned the God of their fathers.

Three years, without fresh supplies, had emptied the granaries of Samaria, which was the capital of the ten tribes; and a drought, uninterrupted even by the moisture of a scanty dew, had burnt up every herb, and dried every fountain of the exhausted earth, when Ahab began to tremble at the frightful sentence that seemed to have gone out against every living creature. Instead of being humbled before the just Avenger, he rather followed the presumptuous suggestion of expiring hope, that the lives of his cattle might yet be redeemed by the discovery of grass and water, in some favoured spot, and in search of these se-

questered treasures he would explore his dominions. Taking one section to himself, he despatched Obadiah into another ; but not far had the latter proceeded, when he was met by the prophet, who told him to go back, and tell his master where *Elijah* might be found. This step, in the eyes of the pious governor, was no less than transferring to himself the fate denounced upon *Elijah*. The omnipotence of *Jehovah* would interpose for the preservation of his faithful servant—whilst he should himself be sacrificed to the disappointment of *Ahab* ! But *Elijah* assuring him that he would follow him to the presence of the king, Obadiah consented to return, and the prophet, in a short time, was brought to his defence against the charge of having occasioned all the calamity of his country. Confident of the event, he boldly denied the reproach, and challenged the king to gather all his wicked counsellors, the ministers of his false gods, and he should see who had brought upon him and his people the chastisement they had suffered. The heroic offer to oppose himself singly to the host of *Baalim*'s priests, was not to be refused. On Mount *Carmel*, therefore, four hundred retainers of *Jezebel*'s court, and four hundred and fifty of a meaner class of priests, were collected to try the efficacy of their incantations against the inspired messenger of heaven. Each party having prepared his sacrificial victim for the great experiment, *Elijah* called upon the people to arouse from their guilty indecision, and enlist under the banner of him who should prevail. "If the Lord be God," said he, "follow him—but if *Baal*, then follow him." *Elijah* then waited patiently from morning to noon, whilst the profligate ministers of *Baal* cried aloud to their patron, gashing themselves all the while, after their savage manner, till they were covered with blood ; but *Baal* was not to be conciliated. "Call aloud," said *Elijah*, with cutting irony, his pious indignation now excited by their horrible superstitions, "for he is a god ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing—or he is on a journey—or, peradventure, he sleepeth, and must be awakened." Vainly, however, were their impious invocations continued till the time of the evening sacrifice. At that hallowed hour, the divinely-commis-

sioned agent, turning to the assembled people, invited their attention, whilst, with twelve stones, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel, he rebuilt an altar, which, in better days, had stood on Carmel, and made a deep trench around it. Then laying his sacrifice on the consecrated pile, he bade them to drench it with water until the trench should be filled, and malice herself should find no room to accuse him of concealing one particle of fire in any crevice of the structure. All this being finished, he called upon the Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, to testify, that He had commanded the things which His servant was now doing in his name. But *he* called not on a god who was to be idly importuned the whole length of a day. Fire, instantly falling from heaven, and consuming the sacrifice, the altar, and every thing adjacent, extorted the unwilling confession from the whole assembly, who, falling on their faces, repeated, "The Lord, *he is the God!*—the Lord, *he is the God!*" Here was an argument not to be eluded by any artifice of the impostors; the people were convinced, and they promptly obeyed the command of Elijah, to seize them every one, and inflict the death their mischievous practices had merited.

When this severe expiation was concluded, a small cloud, almost imperceptible, arising from the sea, Elijah sent his servant to hasten the king from Mount Carmel, lest he should be overtaken by the rain, and encourage him to go home and eat and drink without fear, for abundance should again bless the land. Immediately the firmament blackened with heavy clouds—the wind blew, and torrents of rain confirmed the word of the prophet.

Fanny. Jezebel herself certainly could not escape the conviction which this seasonable miracle was calculated to produce.

Mother. Alas, my dear! the Scriptures afford many instances of the inefficacy even of miracles to impress the heart that has been hardened by a false religion. The death of her ministers only provoked the vile princess to inform their executioner, that he should not behold the setting sun of another day. Well acquainted with her atrocious character, he thought it prudent to retire to the wil-

derness of Beer-sheba in Judah, where, throwing himself down at the foot of a juniper tree, he prayed to be delivered by death, from her unrelenting persecution. But his dejected spirit was revived by an angel, who brought him provisions, and commanded him to proceed to Mount Horeb. The journey might perhaps have been performed in four or five days, but Elijah was forty days on the way, without further sustenance. Whilst he reposed in one of the caves of this eminence, already consecrated by the most stupendous scene that ever met a mortal eye—the same terrible emblems of Omnipotence which had astonished the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt, again announced the presence of the Almighty. Tempestuous winds swept the face of Mount Horeb—the earth trembled—and fires, bursting from the cleft rocks, preceded “a still small voice” reanimating the fainting prophet in his arduous work, by the assurance, that there were still seven thousand left in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal—for whose sake, and for the sake of their faithful ancestors, Israel was to be spared yet a little longer time. The end of his conflict, however, approaching, he was commanded to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to be his successor in the prophetic office—and also to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu to be king over Israel, who would, between them, cut off the house of wicked Ahab, and chastise Israel for their sins. Neither miracles nor mercies had yet affected the king of Israel any more than his abandoned queen; yet, mercies were not withheld; for the Syrians, not long after, with thirty-two confederate kings and an immense army, besieging his capital—and insulting not only the monarch, but the Almighty Protector of his country, were defeated by a little band of Israelites, with the loss of a hundred thousand men. Notwithstanding this evident mark of the displeasure of Heaven at the blasphemy of Benhadad the king of Syria, the pusillanimous Ahab made peace with him on his promise to restore certain cities which had been taken from Israel by his father.

Charles. Was it not right to make peace with Benhadad, who had been beaten, and had submitted?

Mother. It is right for us, in our circumstances, when all nations, morally considered, are equal, to treat the conquered with lenity : but that it was not so for Ahab, is evident, by a message of disapprobation delivered to him by "a man of God," whose name is not mentioned.

But the measure of his iniquity was not yet full. One of his subjects, named Naboth, possessed a beautiful vineyard, which the king offered to purchase, because it was contiguous to his palace at Jezreel. The alienation of a patrimonial inheritance was forbidden by law ; Naboth, therefore, ventured to affront the king by a conscientious refusal. The vexation of Ahab, though very great, might have subsided ; but the proud spirit of his wife would brook no opposition. Resolving, at all events, to obtain the coveted vineyard, she immediately wrote, in the king's name, to the elders of Jezreel, the city of Naboth, to suborn witnesses and accuse him of the capital offence of having blasphemed God and the king. Idolatry, the fruitful parent of every vice, had infected the whole land with depravity. The judges were not ashamed to sanction the injustice and rapacity of the king—but condemned Naboth to be stoned to death ; and that no obstacle might arise to interrupt this lawless seizure of his property, the sons of Naboth shared the fate of their innocent father, and Ahab took possession : not, however, without the final condemnation of a higher authority than his own corrupt court. Hardened as he was, the appearance of Elijah on the way to Jezreel, as he hastened to seize his ill-gotten wealth, dismayed him.

The recollection of his crimes, rapine, murder, and all manner of impiety, struck deep into his terrified soul, whilst the prophet denounced the extirpation of his race, his own awful fate, and that of his barbarous wife. Dogs, he told the king, should eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel—and his own blood should be licked by them in the same place where that of the injured Naboth had been shed. His penitence, though temporary, yet sincere, procured the suspension of his sentence ; but three years afterwards it was literally fulfilled. He was killed in a war with the Syrians, and the blood which flowed from his chariot at the place

where Naboth had been stoned, was licked up by dogs. And the sentence on his atrocious queen, and his family, was executed by Jehu, who reigned about thirteen years after Ahab.

In the reign of this prince we have the literal verification of the denunciation of Joshua against the men who should rebuild the city of Jericho. Hiel, the Bethelite, rebuilt it, whether presumptuously or in ignorance, we are not told; but "he laid the foundation in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua,"—above five hundred years after the prophecy was delivered.

Charles. Mother, the words of prophecy are very obscure: what do you mean by Hiel's laying the foundation of Jericho in his first-born, and setting up the gates in his youngest son?

Mother. The meaning of Joshua was, that the man who should rebuild Jericho, a city which you may remember he utterly destroyed with all its inhabitants—except Rahab and her family—because of their accumulated crimes—would be punished by the loss of his eldest and his youngest son, in the beginning and in the finishing of his work.

The very natural propensity of children to imitate their parents, should be a solemn and unceasing admonition to the latter, and especially to mothers, who are observed to have a more immediate influence on their characters. From such a monster of iniquity as Jezebel, no other than an impious successor to the crown could be expected; and such was Ahaziah, although warned, like his father, by the preaching and miracles of Elijah.

The painful labours of this eminent father in Israel were now to receive a splendid reward. Standing on the western bank of Jordan, with Elisha, who had attended him from the time of his consecration to the prophetic office, the waters were divided before them by a stroke of the mantle of Elijah, and they passed over on dry ground. Elisha was then required to say what blessing should be conferred upon him, before they were separated. "That

a double portion of thy spirit may rest upon me"—said Elisha; "and presently, while they talked, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," in the view of the wrapt Elisha: the second person whose uncommon purity had received this mark of divine approbation—the translation of his body to the regions of everlasting glory.

Charles. Were there any witnesses to this wondrous event beside his favoured disciple?

Mother. The miracles of sacred writ, my son, are fortified against the cavils of objectors by this evidence, amongst others equally conclusive—that they were performed in the presence of a number of competent witnesses. In this case, fifty pupils of the prophet beheld the ascent of Elijah; yet, although they had received some previous intimation of his exit from the earth, on that day the manner was so astonishing, and appeared so incredible to them, that they could not believe it had now taken place, but sought him three days throughout the valleys and mountains of Israel, before they could assent; thus giving weight to their testimony by a scrupulous examination of the reality of the miracle.

Elisha was not surprised, but grieved at the loss of his excellent master. Rending his garments, he took up the mantle which had fallen from the prophet as he arose, and smiting with it the waters, in the name of "the Lord God of Elijah," again they parted, and he repassed the Jordan on dry ground.

Ahaziah reigned but two years, and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, both idolaters, though not altogether so vile as their father. Jehoram's reign of twelve years, was marked by the defection of the Moabites who had been tributary to Israel since the time of David. Being wounded in a war with the Syrians, he retired to Jezreel under the care of his physicians, leaving the army before Ramoth-Gilead. Here Jehu, one of his captains who was raised up for the destruction of the house of Ahab, and had been anointed by Elijah, was a second time consecrated privately, by a messenger from Elisha. The errand

of the young prophet being communicated by Jehu to the army, they immediately proclaimed him king, and united with him in executing the righteous vengeance of heaven on the whole house of Ahab and on Jezebel. But although Jehu had the semblance of great zeal for the ancient religion, he seems rather to have gratified a cruel temper of his own, for whilst he slew the priests of Baal the golden calves of Jeroboam remained!

But let us turn awhile from these revolting scenes to the refreshing view of Elisha, whose benevolent miracles were the glory of those last-mentioned reigns. Not fewer in number nor less resplendent than those of his inspired teacher, he discovered that the mantle of Elijah had indeed fallen upon him!

We have not time to notice every exercise of his divine gift; leaving many for your future entertainment, let us now view him compassionately listening to the poor widow of a prophet who complained, that being unable to pay the creditors of her late husband, they were about to satisfy themselves by the sale of her two sons!

Charles. Would the law have protected them in so unfeeling a measure?

Mother. The law of Moses did expressly forbid such unlimited power over an indigent debtor of their own nation. They might compel him to serve them for wages, but their intercourse with the heathens who even sacrificed their children to their false deities, had confounded their notions of right. All his injunctions of tenderness for the widow and the orphan were forgotten; Elisha therefore questioned her as to the possibility of discharging her debt. But she declared that her whole substance was reduced to a single pot of oil! "Go then," said he, "and borrow empty vessels, not a few, and fill them all from thy pot." Without hesitation she obeyed, and soon returned delighted, to tell him that every vessel was running over, and yet her own was not empty! Thus the happy mother was provided with sufficient to support herself and deliver her children from the merciless creditors!

This miracle together with other acts of beneficence so exalted the fame of Elisha that good people considered

themselves honoured by his presence. A wealthy couple living at Shunem, whom he sometimes visited in his excursions, built an apartment on purpose, and furnished it with every convenience for the accommodation of Elisha and his servant. Desiring to express his sense of their singular attention to his comfort, the grateful prophet inquired of his hostess in what way he could most acceptably requite their kindness. Should he recommend them to the notice of the king, or the commander-in-chief of the army? Already blest with affluence, and not emulous of any courtly distinction above her neighbours, she declined the offered favour and professed her entire satisfaction in her present circumstances by one expressive sentence—"I dwell among mine own people." Considering then, that she had no child, he told her that in the following year, that blessing, so ardently desired by the Israelitish women, should augment her domestic happiness. Hardly could her joy and surprise subside into confidence even in Elisha: but the word of inspiration was fulfilled in the precious gift at the appointed time. A gift which was to reward the virtue of the mother, and add another august evidence of the divine mission of the prophet.

At what age we do not learn, but while yet a child, this darling boy was one day brought into his mother from the field where he had been taken sick as he played beside his father. Solicitude and care were ineffectual—his disorder continued to increase, and in a very few hours he expired in her arms!

It is one of the amazing ordinances of providence that maternal love, the most subduing of all feelings that touch the human heart, does yet stimulate to active exertion, in circumstances the most deeply overwhelming! Whether this weeping Shunamite persuaded herself that one latent spark of life yet lingered in her beloved child, or whether she had heard of the widow of Sarepta, some species of hope seemed to point to the prophet Elisha. Concealing from her husband the sad event, she only entreated that a servant might be spared from the harvest to attend her to their benefactor, and laying her son in the chamber of Elisha, she hastened to his dwelling on Mount Carmel.

Rushing unceremoniously into his presence, her distracted air bespoke some unusual distress, but the almost reproachful expostulation—"Did I desire a son of my lord—did not I say do not deceive me?" told the melancholy tale. His resolution was instantaneous; bidding his servant to go on before and lay his staff on the face of the boy, he followed the mother to his lodging at Shunem. There shut up alone with the breathless object of his affectionate solicitude, the prayer of faith was accepted, and the enraptured mother was presently called to receive her reanimated son!

Charles. Were these benevolent works of Elisha confined to his own nation?

Mother. Not altogether. He prophesied in Damascus, and performed a celebrated cure on a diseased nobleman of Syria.

Charles. Why then did they not embrace the religion of the Hebrews, when they saw the divine power that attended its ministration?

Mother. That was by no means a necessary consequence of allowing a due portion of honour to the God of the Hebrews. The heathen nations, whilst each had his own tutelar god, did not scruple to do homage to those of their neighbours. The Israelites were stigmatized as an unsociable people, because such intercommunity was forbidden by their law. A more exclusive conversion to the God of Israel seems to have been effected in the Syrian officer, to whom I just now alluded. Naaman, a man of distinction in the court of Syria, was a leper, a species of distemper still prevalent in the east, but happily unknown to our temperate regions. "A little maid," who had been carried away amongst the captives, in a predatory incursion into Israel, became the servant of Naaman's wife. Seeing the affliction of her master, she humanely exclaimed—"would to God my lord were with the prophet in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." The idea thus suggested, being reported to the king, he wrote a letter, and despatched Naaman with a princely present to the king of Samaria. The letter, addressed wholly to the king, without any mention of the prophet, was considered only as an artifice to involve him in a new

quarrel with Syria, and he expressed his vexation by tearing his robes, and impatiently asking—"Am *I* a God to kill and make alive, that this man doth send unto me, to recover a man of his leprosy?" Elisha, hearing of the king's embarrassment, desired that Naaman might come to his house, and there learn that there was a *prophet* in Israel. At the door of Elisha, and still sitting in his chariot, he received only an order to go and wash himself seven times in the waters of Jordan. Accustomed to the delusive tricks of his own priests, and expecting something of the same sort from Elisha—his personal appearance at least—the application of his hand, or an invocation to the God of Israel—he rejected the simple prescription, with proud indignation. "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus," he exclaimed, "better than all the waters of Israel—may I not wash in them, and be clean?" Health, however, was the one thing desired, and the suffering Syrian was at length persuaded by his attendants, to make the easy experiment, which having done, he returned to Elisha with the grateful confession of the supremacy of the God of Israel! Resolving now to abjure the false deities of his own country, yet knowing only the foolish superstitions of paganism, he requested two mules' load of the sacred earth of Israel, wherewith he might erect an altar for sacrifice to the only Being whom now he would worship! But his office in the court of Syria obliging him to attend his master in the temple, "and bow himself down to the god Rimmon," Naaman deprecated, before he left the prophet, the suspicion that might thence be cast on the sincerity of his conversion.

Fanny. Elisha, I suppose, could not sanction such apparent inconsistency, in the Syrian, as assisting in the rites of idols—whilst he professed to believe only "in Jehovah?"

Mother. He merely bade him go in peace—trusting, probably, that his mind would be subsequently enlightened in his duty. If Naaman did ignorantly suppose, as some have imagined, that his dependent situation might excuse his apparent homage to an idol, it is but the transcript of our hearts, who are far better instructed. We have all

the same fraudulent plea for some darling indulgence—some “besetting sin,” for which we say with Naaman, “The Lord pardon thy servant in *this* thing!”

Two years after this event, Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, with excessive rigour. Provisions became so dear, as to be entirely beyond the reach of the poorer people, so that the bitterest curse which Moses had declared should befall their apostacy was now felt. Distracted mothers, in the madness of their hunger, devoured their own infants!*

Lamenting the miseries of his people, but not repenting his own sins—the procuring cause—the king put on sackcloth under his royal robes, and walked out on the wall of Samaria. Whilst he ruminated on the sad state of his city, though he knew not yet the crisis to which it had arrived—the voice of a woman, entreating most piteously for help, reached his ear. “If the Lord do not help thee,” said he despondingly, “whence shall I help thee.” Inquiring however into the occasion of her appeal, he learnt that the petitioner and another female, in the agonies of hunger, had agreed to prolong their lives a little space, by eating their own children! Her child had been accordingly devoured—but now that she claimed the promise of her companion, the infant had been concealed and the mother refused to produce him!

This shocking story inflamed the king’s grief into rage—and Elisha must be the sacrifice! Messengers were instantly sent to arrest him, but too tardy for the impatient vengeance of Jehoram, he followed them himself to strike the fatal blow. But his intended victim met him boldly, and charged all the guilt on his own head!

The hour of relief to the sufferers was nevertheless at hand, and the inspired Elisha declared that Samaria should revel in abundance on the morrow. One of the king’s attendants repelled the prophecy with scorn—such a thing would be impossible unless food were rained down from heaven into their hands! “Thou shalt see it,”—replied Elisha, “with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof!”

* Deut. 28, 57., six hundred years before this event.

Charles. How indeed could such a supply take place so soon as the very next day?

Mother. By means of an event unexpected indeed, but very far from incredible. A supernatural noise in the night was made to disturb the besieging camp—the air was filled with terrific sounds—chariots and horsemen and the hosts of confederated nations seemed to approach—darkness increased the universal panic, and the Syrians, unprepared for resistance, fled precipitately for their lives, leaving their tents stored with provisions and gold. Four men, who being infected with the leprosy, were lodged without the walls,* had concluded that death from the enemy's hand was not more to be dreaded than that which awaited them from famine, and perhaps they might be preserved by going over to them. To the Syrian camp, therefore, they went by the dawn of day, and found it completely abandoned! After satisfying their hunger, and concealing such articles of plunder as they chose for themselves—they returned with the joyful news to Samaria.—The famishing inhabitants rushed out in crowds to the providential banquet: the charge of the gate was given to the incredulous lord who had despised the prediction of Elisha—and there he received the punishment of his infidelity, for he was trampled to death by the impetuous multitude, whom no authority could restrain at such a moment.

Such substantial benefits following the prediction of Elisha, he commanded some reverence even from Jehoram himself—for we are ever ready to do homage to the talents that promote our own interests. One day whilst he talked with Gehazi, the prophet's servant, of the miracles which his master had performed, and was listening to the interesting story of his having restored the son of the Shunamite to life; the mother herself appeared in the presence of the king! Before the pressure of the famine, she had retired by the advice of the prophet into the country of Philistia, to avoid the approaching evil. Returning when that was past, and after an interval of seven years,

* Levit. c. 13. v. 46.

she found her house and land in the possession of another, and now came to the king to entreat his interposition for the recovery of her property. Gehazi fortunately being present and pleading the friendship of his master for the Shunamite, she received at once the royal order, for the restoration of her lands.

Elisha flourished in Israel more than fifty years, and although his ministrations produced no permanent effect upon their morals, he was yet highly respected by the people. Indeed, it was impossible to withhold their assent to the divinity of his mission, because his prophecies, relating chiefly to the events of his own times, were fulfilled before their eyes. Nor did his wondrous influence cease with his life. Some months after his death, his decaying corpse was seen to revivify a dead body, which but touched it accidentally.

Charles. Accidentally—was not the dead body put into the grave of the prophet in the expectation of this happy consequence?

Mother. Nothing similar to this miracle had ever occurred, to give birth to such a hope. The funeral of a man was proceeding to another place of burial, when the attendants were alarmed by the sudden appearance of a band of plundering Moabites. Consulting only their own safety, they hastily put the corpse into the sepulchre of Elisha, which chanced to be at hand, and would have fled from the apprehended violence of the marauders—but astonishment must have riveted them to the spot, when they saw their friend awakened from the sleep of death, on but touching the bones of Elisha.*

Elisha lived to see his prophecy against the house of Ahab executed by Jehu: and Hazael, the Syrian, according also with the prediction, become the oppressor of Israel—dismembering the kingdom of the land of Gilead, and treating the inhabitants with great barbarity. The posterity of Jehu possessed the throne of Israel, to the fourth generation, agreeably to the promise made to him as the

* A splendid painting of this miracle, by our ingenious countryman, Alston, is exhibited in the Academy of Fine Arts, in this city.

reward of his obedience in some important particulars. In the reign of Jehoash, the grandson of Jehu, a successful war was carried on against Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael, and the cities which his father had taken were recovered; but the history of the ten tribes is but the continual history of vicissitude and war—of idolatry, usurpation and murder—preparing the way, by rapid steps, to that complete extermination which had often been foretold.

About thirty years, from the deposition of Jehu's family, including the reign of four kings—all of whom, excepting one, were subjects, and obtained the crown by putting their respective sovereigns to death,—brings us down to the reign of Hoshea, another assassin and usurper.

In the preceding reign, Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria, had taken some of the finest provinces of Israel, and carried the inhabitants into captivity. Shalmaneser, his son and successor, attacked the remainder, and laid Hoshea under tribute. Confederating with Egypt, which was now very powerful, the king of Israel vainly hoped to shake off the ignominious yoke, and withheld the tribute. But Shalmaneser, hearing of the conspiracy, came again into Palestine, and besieged Samaria, which, after three years' defence, was taken: the conquered king was imprisoned, and the inhabitants were all carried into the cities of the Medes, which had before received their unhappy brethren.

Thus ten of the twelve tribes which took possession of the land of Canaan, literally exemplified the prophecy of Moses.* (B. C. 677.) "It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day—the Lord shall bring thee and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, and there thou shalt serve other gods, wood, and stone."

The land of Israel, thus stripped of her native sons, was re-peopled by Assyrians, whom the conqueror sent thither. Finding their new habitations infested by wild beasts, by

* Deut. xxviii. 15—36.

whom some of the colonists were killed, they were seized with religious terror, and ascribed the visitation to their ignorance of the manner in which the deity of that place ought to be worshipped. A priest, of the captives, was therefore sent to instruct them; but if he taught them at all to know the God of Israel, they only received Him amongst the number of their own deities: thus a mongrel religion was introduced, and was perpetuated to their posterity, who were denominated Samaritans. They were also called Cutheans—because some of the strangers came from a place called Cuth.

Catherine. Were there any prophets in Israel, in the times of which you have been speaking, besides Elijah and Elisha?

Mother. Several of those who are called the minor prophets lived in this period. Amos and Hosea foretold the destruction of Israel, in the reign of the second Jeroboam, the great-grandson of Jehu, because there was “no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land,”—that Samaria should become desolate, and the Assyrian should be her king. Amos stood boldly in the temple of the golden calf, at Bethel, and told the people that “their impious feasts should be turned into mourning—their songs into lamentations,”—that “Israel should be led away captive out of their own land, and scattered amongst the nations.” His warning was called a conspiracy; the king and his priests were uneasy; but not choosing to lay violent hands on him, they entreated that he would go from them, and prophesy in Judah—but the faithful pastor replied, that he was expressly sent unto *Israel*—that he had not been educated in the sacred college, nor did he call on them in the casual exercise of a profession—“*I was* no prophet,” said he, “nor the son of a prophet; but a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and as I followed the flock, Jehovah said unto me, Go prophecy unto my people, Israel.” And Micah, in the reign of Hoshea, declared to them, that sacrificial rites, however multiplied, would not atone for their transgressions. They were required “to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with their God;” and that having neglected these com-

mands, and "kept the statutes of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab," the Assyrian should desolate their land.

As I propose to give you a general view of the prophetic writings, by and by, I merely notice them now as they are connected with the several parts of Jewish history. The book of Jonah does not come within this description; but, as he flourished at this period, it may be proper to mention it in this place; and, as it is wholly narrative, you will be entertained, as well as edified, by a more particular account of its contents.

Jonah is supposed to have foretold, in the reign of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, the restoration of the coasts of that country, which had been seized by Hazael, the Syrian, and were recovered by the second Jeroboam. I do not state a supposition with respect to the prophecy, but to the precise time in which it was delivered, which is an unimportant circumstance.

But his principal mission was to a Gentile nation. He was the instrument employed to suspend the threatened judgments against the great metropolis of Assyria. Nineveh was very ancient, dating its foundation so early as the time of Asher, the grandson of Noah. It was sixty miles in circuit, and contained not less than six hundred thousand persons. Abounding in wealth, it was immoral to excess—and Jonah was commanded to tell the inhabitants, that unless they repented, in forty days their city would be destroyed.

It is not likely that the great Supreme would leave his servant in doubt about the source of a command from himself, in whatever way communicated. Jonah well knew that obedience was his duty; but he wanted fortitude to dare the rage of the proud Ninevites, and, without reflecting that he could not flee from the Lord of the Universe, he determined to neglect his mandate, and go to Tarshish.

Catherine. Tarshish? that was the place from which David and Solomon imported such immense quantities of gold.

Mother. No: it was more probably another Tarshish. The scriptures seem to speak of two places of that name,

but do not describe the situation of either. Both the Tarshish and the Ophir, whose gold was so abundant in Jerusalem, are supposed to be in East India. The city to which Jonah attempted to retire, is said to be the same which is called Tarsus in the New Testament—the birth-place of Paul, and so named from Tarshish, its founder, a grandson of Japhet, whose posterity, you may remember, I told you, migrated to Europe.

To go to Tarshish, Jonah took a passage on board a ship at Joppa—now Jaffa, on the Mediterranean. But soon a tremendous storm sent the terrified mariners to call upon their gods for deliverance. Lots, too, were cast to discover the offender, for whose sake they were in peril, that he might be sacrificed to the vengeance of the angry deities. The lot falling on the disobedient prophet, he was awakened from a sleep and entreated to call also upon *his* God, and to declare to his companions the cause of their present danger. With the deepest contrition, he acknowledged that he had been sent to Nineveh, and had “fled from the face of the Lord.” Assuring them of safety to themselves, he desired them to cast him into the sea; but humanity prompted them first to try every other means of preservation. The tempest, however, still raging, the sailors confess the sovereignty of Jonah’s God, and commit him to the waves. Punishment alone, not death, being designed, Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, and, after remaining three days in his gloomy tomb, was cast alive on dry land.

Convinced now that He who could preserve him three days, in the bosom of the great deep, could protect him in the execution of his mission, he went immediately to Nineveh, and proclaimed the dread decree: “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

It is very possible that the report of the late miracle may have disposed the inhabitants to listen to the prophet: perhaps his incarceration within a great whale, declared by himself, was believed. Certainly, his message was accompanied by such evidence as could not be evaded, for it produced obedience, the genuine fruit of faith. The king laid aside his royal robes, and putting on sackcloth, com-

manded his people to follow his example, to keep a rigid fast, denying themselves, and their beasts even, so much as water,—to turn from every evil way, and repent heartily, and to pray earnestly ;—“ who can tell,” said he, “ if God will turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?” Accordingly, the prayer of faith ascended to the Throne of Grace, and Nineveh was spared for a time.

Charles. Was not Jonah rejoiced at the success of his preaching ?

Mother. The prophets, my son, were but men, like others. They foresaw events the most unlikely, and they performed wondrous miracles ; but they had the failings of humanity. In the faithful record of their errors, we have a triumphant answer to those who tell us, that the Messiah, “ of whom they spake,” was but a prophet like themselves :—in one, we see infirm creatures—in the other, a *perfect* character. Jonah was not only timid, but culpably jealous of his own honour. In the probable penitence of the Ninevites, and the consequent reversal of his denunciation, he feared that his prophetic name might be tarnished. Already forgetting the pardon of his own sin, he grieved that the same mercy had been accorded to a multitude of his fellow creatures. Uncertain, however, of the event, he went out of the city, and sat down on an eminence, to observe its fate. Repenting Nineveh still reared her proud towers—her princely palaces and her stupendous walls survived the threatened day, and Jonah peevishly exclaimed, “ Was not this my saying when I was yet in my country ? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish : for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful ; slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore, now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live ?”

Suddenly, in the course of one night, “ a gourd,” or spreading vine, was made to spring up from the earth, and surround him with a grateful shelter ; as suddenly, a worm preyed upon its root, and in a night it perished. Exposed now to a scorching wind and meridian sun, combined with the corroding effects of a wounded mind, the suffering pro-

phet lamented the loss of his bower, and prayed again for death. "Then," said the Lord, "thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

By this beautiful illustration, the prophet's selfishness was reproved, and an affecting moral left for our improvement. How apt are we to behold, unmoved, the calamities of others, whilst we murmur and repine at the smallest inconvenience to ourselves! We are all sinners, and, therefore, subjected to trials. Let us submit with patience to the loss of our dearest treasures, and sympathize with others in their sorrows; remembering, that however distinguished by names, or by nations, the whole human race are our brethren—heirs, alike, of divine mercy and immortal bliss.

Having seen the awful end of apostacy in the ten tribes, let us return to the house of David, and, in the same summary manner, take a view of their progress to ruin; for they too apostatized, but not to the same unpardonable excess; nor was their doom irrevocable, like that of the sister state.

We left the kingdom of Judah in the hands of Jehoshaphat, upon whose death the crown devolved to Jehoram, his son. Jehoram was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, the king of Israel, and was seduced, by this unfortunate connexion, to imitate the vices of that wicked prince. His heart, however, must have been radically bad, for he inhumanly put all his brothers to death, besides others of the chief men of Jerusalem. All the pious regulations of his father were now abolished, and the people compelled to worship the images of the Gentiles. The Edomites, who had been conquered and made a province of the empire by David, took advantage of the convulsions into which the misconduct of Jehoram threw the commonwealth, and, revolting from him, made a king for themselves. Thus the prophecy of Isaac, delivered nearly nine

hundred years before, was fulfilled—that Esau should be subject to Jacob; but, in time, should liberate himself from the yoke. (Gen. 27. 40.) About the same time, the Philistines and Arabians broke suddenly into the royal city, plundered the palace, and carried away the wives of Jehoram, and all his sons, except Ahaziah, the youngest. After a miserable reign of eight years, Jehoram was afflicted with a very dreadful disease, and died unlamented by his people, who marked their disapprobation of his character by refusing to inter him in the sepulchres of their kings. Ahaziah, or Jehoahaz, as he is also called, next ascended the throne, and in his short rule of one year, and under the influence of his mother, pursued the steps of the late reign. On a visit to the king of Israel, he was seized in Samaria, by Jehu, and put to death, because he was, by his mother's side, descended from Ahab. This ambitious woman, inheriting the vices of her family, procured the death of all the princes of the blood in whom she might expect a competition for the government, and held the reins herself seven years. At that time, an heir to the throne unexpectedly appeared in young Joash, a son of Ahaziah, who had been concealed since the massacre of his brethren, in the chambers of the temple, by his aunt, the wife of Jehoiada, the priest. Preparations being secretly made for his coronation, the Levites, the singers, and musicians, in their places, the young prince, at the age of seven years, was invested, with the usual solemnities, and without interruption, until the acclamations of “God save the king,” with the sound of the cymbals and trumpets, alarming the queen, she rushed into the temple, tearing her robes and crying Treason! But her crimes had excited such abhorrence, that not a voice was heard in her behalf, and her life was only spared till she could be conveyed beyond the sacred courts.

Fanny. What were the solemnities observed at the coronation of a king?

Mother. He was anointed by the High Priest, the crown put upon his head, and “the book of the law” delivered into his hand—to remind him that he was most diligently to study its precepts, and make them the rule of his whole

conduct. In this case, where opposition was apprehended, the guards of the temple were armed, and surrounded the king; and the people having been greatly corrupted by the disorders of the former reigns, were called upon to renew their covenant of allegiance to Jehovah—the only true God.

The excellent Jehoiada was far advanced in years at the time of this revolution. He lived to the great age of a hundred and thirty, and was an eminent blessing to the nation; for all the days of his life they were obedient and prospered. The tribute-money for the sacred treasury was regularly collected—the temple was repaired, the golden vessels which Athaliah had carried to her idols, were replaced, and the institutions of Moses were all carefully restored. In short, the public usefulness and activity of Jehoiada were so highly esteemed, that his remains were distinguished by the particular honour of a burial in the magnificent sepulchre of the kings.

The great national advantage of such a counsellor was manifested by the disorders which soon followed on the death of this upright priest. The nobles about the young king, who had not been well affected to the reformation, by their flatteries and intrigues persuaded him to restore the idols, and worship in the consecrated groves. A deaf ear was turned to the prophets, who visited them in mercy, and even Zachariah, the son of their benefactor Jehoiada, and now the high priest, was ungratefully stoned to death, for presuming to denounce the wrath of heaven.

The next year, Jerusalem was invaded by the Syrians—a great number of the nobles were slaughtered, and their moveable effects carried off to Damascus, the capital of Syria. Joash himself fell by a conspiracy of his own servants; and Amaziah, his son, ascended the throne of Judah. Amaziah experienced the same fate, after a reign of nine and twenty years. His conduct, too, was like that of his father—beginning auspiciously, but terminating in idolatry. Ambitious of bringing back the Edomites to the crown of Judah, he destroyed twenty thousand of that unfortunate people. Elated by his victory, and ascribing it to the gods of Idumea, he brought their images into the

holy land, and offered incense to them. Meanwhile, the *Israelites*, in revenge for not having been permitted to participate in the expedition, fell upon the northern cities of Judah, plundered them, and killed three thousand of the inhabitants; and advancing to Jerusalem with savage ferocity, they broke down four hundred cubits of the city wall, and rifled both the palace and the temple.

Fanny. That the treasures of the temple should allure the heathen enemies of Judah, is not surprising; but that the posterity of Abraham should themselves have become so lost to all sense of decorum as to commit the sacrilege of robbing that august depository, is really extraordinary.

Mother. It is not surprising, my dear, that they who had cast off the Sovereign, should cease to venerate his earthly habitation. We are very apt to be disgusted by the impiety of the *Israelites*, but we may often moderate our feelings, by comparing them with ourselves. How often have conquerors who called themselves Christians, been enriched by the spoils of Christian temples! Pride, and ambition, are the same in all ages; education, and opportunity, do but vary their forms.

Uzziah, to whose reign we are now come, was another example of the fatal influence of prosperity. He was virtuous, and became powerful. The civil honours of the administration were then not enough. He went into the sanctuary and took a censer to burn incense, but his presumption excluded him ever after from that holy place—for, resenting the freedom of the priests, who reproved his invasion of their office, he was smitten with leprosy, and could no more approach the altar. (Lev. xiii. 46.)

Jotham, his son, affords a more pleasing picture. His reign was short, but beneficial to the kingdom; the waste places were repaired, cities and fortresses were erected, and large subsidies obtained from the neighbouring kings.

Again every thing was reversed in the succeeding reign. Ahaz, a most abominable wretch, who exceeded all his predecessors and all the kings of Israel in depravity, sacrificed his own children, in imitation of the heathens. Greater provocations never reached the throne of Justice: accordingly, he was severely chastised by Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria.

Confederating together, they invaded Judah, with an immense army; besieged Ahaz in the metropolis, and ravaged his territories in every direction. But the punishment of the king, not the total ruin of the empire, being the design of this visitation, Ahaz was encouraged to defend the city, by the prophet Isaiah, who had now begun to shed the lustre of his sublime prophecies on the favoured land. Success crowned his resistance, and his enemies went away disappointed. The heart of Ahaz, however, remaining untouched by his merciful preservation, another chastisement by the hand of the two kings, in the following year, more severely afflicted him. The valuable port of Elath was taken by the Syrians, and the Jews* were driven thence; whilst the Israelites slew a hundred and twenty thousand of their brethren, and carried away captives to the enormous amount of two hundred thousand. These poor people had the good fortune to return to their own country. Oded, a prophet in Samaria, reproved the victors for their excessive cruelty to their kinsmen. The Elders would not suffer them to be brought into the city; but comforted and refreshed them, and conducted them safely back as far as Jericho. The confederated kings were both slain soon after, as had been foretold by Isaiah,—Pekah by his servant Hoshea, as I have already told you in the history of Israel—and Rezin by the Assyrians.

Scarcely was Judah delivered from these powerful enemies, before her territory was invaded on the south and west, by the Philistines and Edomites, who took several cities and villages. In this new distress, instead of asking relief from the gracious Hand which had before brought him unmerited deliverance, the degenerate king sent to Assyria for assistance. Tiglath-pileser, who now reigned, came indeed at his invitation, but it was only to reduce him still lower, by receiving large presents from the nobles, and gold and silver from the temple, the stipulated price of his alliance, without doing any real service to the distracted country. But the treasures of Jerusalem assisted

* This is the first place in Scripture where this name occurs: 2 Kings, xvi. 6.

Tiglath in his meditated hostilities against other neighbouring powers. Having brought an army into that quarter under the pretext of relieving Judah, on his way back he seized upon Galilee in the north of Israel, and all their dominions beyond Jordan; then marching on to Syria, he put an end to that kingdom, after it had lasted ten generations, having been founded in the reign of Solomon.*

After all these calamities, and the ruinous treachery of Tiglath-pileser notwithstanding, Ahaz condescended to meet him on his return to Damascus from the conquest of Syria.

Catherine. Perhaps this seeming respect was extorted by his dependence on Assyria.

Mother. It is very likely; but his corrupted heart kept pace with his political degradation. At Damascus, he was so delighted with the form of a pagan altar, that he sent a model to Jerusalem, and commanded the priests to erect one in all respects like it, against his return. In short, altars were now seen in every corner of the land, and finally the temple doors were closed, and the worship of Jehovah entirely suppressed.

Happily for suffering Judah, these outrages were arrested by the death of their tyrant in the flower of his age, and the institutions of their fathers again restored by his successor Hezekiah.

Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, was probably indebted to the instructions of his mother, who was the daughter of Zachariah, a zealous minister of the true religion, that he came to the throne with an utter abhorrence of the prevailing impiety. No sooner was the power in his hands, than the groves and images were pulled down, the temple opened and purified, the Levites gathered in from their retreats, and all the officers of the sanctuary again established in the order appointed by David. Sin offerings were presented, and, as early as possible, preparation was made for the celebration of a grand passover. Hezekiah himself superintended every thing, and exhorted the priests to be diligent, that atonement might speedily be made for the

* See Prideaux, vol. i. p. 4.

transgressions of their fathers, and the wrath of heaven be turned away from all Israel. This reformation commenced in the beginning of the first month, but such was the desolation and impurity of the temple, that it was not ready for the passover until the second month; it was therefore determined by the king and his counsellors, to observe the festival on the fourteenth day of the second month, instead of the fourteenth of the first as originally appointed. By this arrangement, too, a sufficient time was allowed to send expresses throughout the Holy Land, proclaiming the intended passover. This remarkable event took place in the reign of Hoshea, the last king of the revolted tribes, and after they had been so greatly humbled by the first captivity of his subjects by Tiglath-pileser. The good king Hezekiah, compassionating the oppressed and precarious condition of Israel, affectionately invited them also to repair to Jerusalem, persuading them by the interesting consideration, that their prayers and humiliation might be the means of restoring their relatives to their native country.

Some of these infatuated people read the royal rescript only with derision, but many gladly accepted the opportunity, and the feast was held with great splendour and joy, not only seven days, but another seven, to manifest their gratitude and willingness to return to the gracious Being whom they had so long forsaken.

Fanny. Did not the revolt of the ten tribes exclude them from the right of assisting in the solemnities of the annual festival at Jerusalem?

Mother. By no means. They were still the posterity of Jacob, and their right to all the privileges bestowed on that people was never questioned. There is reason to believe, that there were always individuals, amidst the utmost profligacy of the nation, who would willingly have availed themselves of those advantages; but all the institutions of their religion, and the passover itself, were now very carelessly performed, and were often entirely neglected, by Judah as well as Israel. Profane authors, to whom we are not unfrequently indebted for the elucidation of passages, obscure either from the brevity of sacred writ, or our own imperfect knowledge of the manners of the

times, inform us, that guards were stationed on the frontiers of their dominions by the kings of the ten tribes, to prevent the resort of their subjects to Jerusalem, on these great national occasions; apprehending, as Jeroboam did on his revolt, that they might be tempted back to their first standard. The calves of Dan and Bethel were now gone; the precious metal of which they were made, had not escaped the rapacity of successive invaders; and this circumstance, perhaps, together with the degraded state of his kingdom, operating on the humbled Hoshea, he laid no further restraint on such as might choose to worship at Jerusalem, nor did he hinder them from breaking down, on their return, the heathen altars, which they did with all the enthusiasm of new converts to the holy cause. Alas! it was the last ray of departing glory to this unhappy people, for Samaria was soon afterwards sacked by Shalmaneser, and themselves either massacred, or sent to end their days in Assyria.

Amongst other objects of their misguided devotion, the brazen serpent which Moses had erected in the wilderness, had remained to this day an object of superstitious veneration. Hezekiah therefore took it down and broke it in pieces, resolving, wisely, to remove every sensible object which, by any association in their depraved imaginations, might seduce them from the pure and spiritual worship of the invisible Jehovah.

Religion thus restored to an honourable footing in Judah, by the determined vigilance of the king, his civil enterprises were alike blest with success. The wisest of their monarchs had recorded, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and their experience had invariably attested the truth of the sacred axiom. Not only were the places that had been wrested from them by the Philistines, retaken, but much of that country was also added to the dominions of Hezekiah. In this flourishing state of his affairs, the king of Judah ventured to refuse the tribute which his father had promised to Assyria, and escaped with impunity for that time, Shalmaneser being engaged in wars with other powers.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Shalmaneser

being dead, Sennacherib, his son, ascended the throne of Assyria, and immediately renewed the demand of tribute from the king of Judah; and Hezekiah, in the vain hope of peace, or desirous of time to prepare against a foe so very formidable, agreed to pay him an immense sum of silver and gold; considerably exceeding one million of dollars. To raise this vast tribute, he was obliged to empty his treasury, and even to despoil the temple of some of its precious ornaments. But whilst any thing remains, the ambition of an unprincipled conqueror is unsatisfied. Israel had fallen, and Judah must add another gem to the proud crown of Assyria. Israel had fallen "because they had neglected the statutes of the God of Israel." Sennacherib was yet to learn that the obedient were assured of His protection. Israel was delivered up by the God they had forsaken; His power was therefore derided by Assyria, and blasphemous messages to Hezekiah demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were called upon to rebel against their king and give up the city before a famine should compel them, and he himself was reproached with the vain hope that he should receive succours from the deceitful king of Egypt. Or if he depended on the arm of his God—"Is it not he," cried the herald, "whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and restricted his subjects to one altar in Jerusalem?"

Catherine. Did the Assyrians make no distinction between the sacred Temple and their idolatrous groves?

Mother. They knew of none, perhaps—the violation of an altar was impiety with them, whether it were dedicated to the God of heaven, or to the gods of the nations. In this critical state of his capital, besieged and insulted by a formidable and victorious foe—Hezekiah was seized, as it is supposed, with a pestilential disease, and received a message by Isaiah, to prepare himself for death. Still in the prime of life, flourishing, happy, and the delight of his subjects, it is not surprising that we find him extremely cast down and praying earnestly for a reprieve. A reprieve was graciously granted, for fifteen years, and the promise was confirmed by a sign, so transcendantly strange, and so hard to be understood, that I can only relate it in

the words of the prophet by whom the message was sent. "I have heard," said Isaiah, "thy prayer—I have seen thy tears—behold I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken. Behold I will bring the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward."

In the mean time, Hezekiah had prepared for the threatened assault. The walls of the city were repaired—the wells and water-courses without, were filled up or turned into new channels—darts, shields, and spears, were made ready, and his army put into good order. Yet did he not trust in his own strength, but sent his chiefs, clothed in sackcloth, to desire the prayers of Isaiah,—and when he had recovered from his illness, he went himself on the appointed *third day*, arrayed in the same mournful garb, and carrying the profane letters of Sennacherib in his hand, to the temple of the Lord of hosts, to deprecate his wrath. Again the prophet was commanded to assure him that "the king of Assyria should not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it, but should return by the way that he came."

The same night, the "destroying angel" went through the Assyrian camp—and the morning light discovered the dead bodies of a hundred and eighty-five thousand men to their astonished chief. Terror-struck by the awful spectacle, he retired precipitately with the remnant, leaving his tents, richly stored with silver and gold, to the rejoicing Israelites.

Catherine. I have somewhere read that this sudden destruction was caused by lightning.

Mother. It was more likely effected by the *Simoom*, a hot and suffocating wind, which, in the East, is often fatal to vast numbers, particularly in the night, whilst sleeping. This conjecture is strengthened by the words of Isaiah, in his encouraging message to Hezekiah: "I will send a *blast*

upon him, and he shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." The sacred text is silent as to the means by which this great army was destroyed—no doubt it was by the agency of some natural cause. But both parts of the prophecy were fulfilled; Sennacherib returned hastily to Nineveh, and there fell by the sword of his own sons, whilst he worshipped in the house of his god Nisroch.

Fanny. The miracle of bringing back the shadow on the sun-dial is too strange—too singular to be understood—can you tell us in what manner the effect was produced?

Mother. Nothing more is communicated to us than the accomplishment of the sign promised; "that the sun did return ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down;" and it is not for us "to be wise above what is written." It is our business to examine and to be satisfied with the evidences for *the inspiration* of the Scriptures—we shall then never stumble at miracles. Prophecy was altogether miraculous, and its fulfilment, in examples without number, takes away every pretext for incredulity. Miracles are never spoken of as common events, but as things entirely out of the common course of nature, and produced for some special end. This retrogression of the heavenly bodies—and a similar event in the life of Joshua—were so far different from other miracles, that the effect was extended beyond the observation of the persons for whom the mighty deeds were performed. Hence an opportunity was afforded to the enemies of the Jewish religion, to contradict their public records, had they attempted an imposition. But no such question has come down to us. On the contrary, the history of the Chinese is said to speak of a day of uncommon length, corresponding with the time of Joshua: and in the case of Hezekiah, ambassadors came from Babylon, to congratulate him on his recovery, and "to inquire *of the wonder that was done in the land.*"

The honour of an embassy, however, from Babylon, and that, too, occasioned by a distinguished favour from the King of kings, was fatal to the pious monarch. The latent spark of human pride was awakened—all the splendour of his palace was displayed, the strength of his ar-

moury, and his treasury—replenished by the spoils which the terrified Sennacherib had left in his camp—were exhibited to the Babylonish princes.

We should have expected to hear him who had published a memorial of his sickness and an humble acknowledgment of the mercy which had restored him—giving the glory of his riches to the Supreme Benefactor—"the Giver of every good and perfect gift." But we read with pity, that "his heart was lifted up"—"that he rendered not according to the benefit received"—wherefore his prophetic monitor now told him, that of his treasures nothing should be left—but the day should come when both they, and his children, should be taken away by the very people who had witnessed his vain glory.

The remainder of Hezekiah's life was exempt from any disturbance, either foreign or domestic. His whole reign of twenty-nine years having been highly beneficial to the nation, his death was deeply lamented, and he was buried with great pomp, in the highest place of the royal sepulchre, beside the most illustrious of their monarchs. (B. C. 698.)

In the reign of Hezekiah, commentators place the prophecy of Nahum; for no date being prefixed, it can only be ascertained by internal evidence, and by a comparison of one portion of history with another. Bishop Lowth, a most accomplished critic on Hebrew poetry, pronounces the book of Nahum "a complete and perfect poem, of which the conduct and imagery are truly admirable." In the first chapter, after celebrating, in lofty terms, the power, and the justice, and the mercy of Jehovah, he promises deliverance to Hezekiah from the Assyrians, who, having put an end to the kingdom of Israel, now menaced that of Judah. Then, turning to Nineveh, he denounces the ruin of "the bloody city," which is all full of lies and robbery—"whose merchants were multiplied as the stars of heaven." "It shall come to pass," cries the prophet, "that all they that look upon thee, shall flee from thee, and say—Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her?"

In Hezekiah's reign, we had the refreshing spectacle of an excellent son succeeding a most unworthy father. The

picture is now reversed, and we are to behold all the glories of his wisdom, and the monuments of his piety, prostrated by a degenerate successor. Manasseh not only went beyond the excesses of all the former kings of Judah, but is said to have done "worse than the heathens" who had been extirpated for their sins; filling Jerusalem, in the prodigality of his wickedness, with the blood of those who refused to comply with his detestable requisitions. Amongst these meritorious martyrs, the murder of the venerable *Isaiah* is believed to have cried aloud for vengeance on the polluted land.

The inspired records inform us, that *Isaiah* prophesied more than sixty years, in the days of *Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*; but leave us ignorant of the time of his death. Traditions, which are credited by respectable commentators, represent him to have "been sawn asunder," by *Manasseh*, whose guilt was aggravated beyond measure, by the circumstance of being the son-in-law of this inspired teacher!

Charles. Dear mother, I almost fear to ask, what dreadful punishment was inflicted on such a monster?

Mother. Chains and captivity in *Babylon*, were his recompense—a recompense more lenient than he had earned; but deep repentance, in his dungeon, procured his pardon and restoration to *Jerusalem*; where he reigned thirty-four years afterwards, sincerely endeavouring, by the most religious care of his people, to atone for his crimes. Yet he could not obliterate the sad traces of memory: for when "he slept with his fathers," he was refused a place in the "sepulchre of the kings,"—an honour awarded only to the most virtuous of the race.

Amon imitated the vices of his father *Manasseh*, but did not profit by the example of his consequent sufferings. Happily, his power was of short duration; for he was cut off by some of his servants, when he had worn the crown of *Judah* but two years. These conspirators were immediately put to death by the people: but whether they had at this time, sufficient virtue to revolt from the murder of their king—or, whether his life was precious, because he gratified their idolatrous inclinations, we are not informed.

The providential incident however, which made way for the succession of Josiah, was a great blessing to the nation.

This young prince in his childhood evinced the most estimable disposition. He was but eight years of age when he was proclaimed king,—at twelve he commenced the destruction of every remnant of irreligion, which Manasseh had neglected or Amon had revived; and in his eighteenth year, he proceeded with the greatest diligence and ardour to repair and purify the sacred temple.

Fanny. With what pleasure would he have listened to the instruction of such a preceptor as the sublime Isaiah, had he remained till his day!

Mother. That deficiency, however, was made up to him by Jeremiah, who was called to the prophetic office, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, and continued his exhortations from that time to the final dissolution of the state.

Whilst the ministers of the temple were assiduously engaged in searching all the chambers of that immense structure, that every pollution might be banished, and every part undergo the complete renovation commanded by the king, Hilkiah, the high priest, laid his hand accidentally on the original copy of the law, which ought always to have been kept beside the ark; but had, probably, been put out of sight, into some remote corner, to preserve it from the exterminating fury of some one of their idolatrous kings.

Such was the degeneracy of the Israelites at this period of their history, that the king himself, who, at his coronation, was directed to this book,* as the law by which he was to govern, seems to have been, in a great measure, ignorant of its contents: for when the secretary, or scribe, who was sent with the newly-found treasure, was reading it, in his presence, the penalties denounced upon transgressors threw him into the utmost consternation! Rending his clothes with the liveliest expressions of terror and grief, he sent directly to a prophetess, wife to the keeper of the wardrobe of the temple, to inquire how he might

* See Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

avert the wrath that was threatened in the book that had been found, and which he now feared would be poured out upon himself and his people, because "their fathers" had not obeyed its injunctions. "Go," returned Huldah, "and tell the man that sent you to me: Thus saith the Lord—I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read, because they have forsaken me, and burned incense unto other gods. But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to *him*—Because thy heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and hast wept before me, *I also have heard thee!* saith the Lord—thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see the evil that I will bring upon this place."

The effect of this gracious promise to the young prince, was not such as might have been expected in a youth, the possessor of a sceptre, and not more than twenty years of age. It did not lull him into indolent security; but rather animated him to greater activity in the service of his beneficent Judge. Without delay, he summoned the inhabitants of Judah "both great and small," to appear at the temple, and there, surrounded by the Elders, and the Levites, he read aloud the whole "book of the covenant," then, himself giving the example, he required them to renew their engagement "to keep these commandments, with all their heart and all their soul."

Fanny. The temple, though very large, certainly could not contain all the inhabitants of Judah.

Mother. It is not reasonable to suppose that the whole population is intended in this passage. The words "great and small" may apply to different classes. The heads only of families might attend on this interesting occasion, a multitude of whom might hear while the speaker stood in a portico of the building.

When this solemn ceremony was finished, the work of reformation proceeded with unremitting ardour, and the demolition, which Manasseh, after his restoration, had but

begun, was completed. Indeed, when we see the extent and variety of the monuments of their devotion to idolatry—altars to the sun and moon, and chariots and horses in honour of the sun, erected at the very “entrance of the house of the Lord,” we are prepared for the awful catastrophe which approached, and only wonder that it was suspended so long!

The books of the Chronicles and Kings, relate many curious particulars of all these vicissitudes in Israel, which I pass over without notice. One remarkable event, however, of this period, I must not omit, because you are desirous to see the fulfilment of prophecies. In their journey through the provinces, the king himself taking the round with the priests whom he had appointed to go throughout the land, and remove every emblem of false worship, the sepulchres of the priests, whom Jeroboam had sacrilegiously consecrated, at Bethel, “of the lowest order of the people,” were discovered, and the altar on which they had burned incense, was yet standing. This was several ages after the prophecy which I related to you in the life of Jeroboam. Josiah was ignorant of the prediction, which had even mentioned him by name; but, in order to give a signal instance of his utter abhorrence of idolatry, he ordered the bones to be brought out of the sepulchre, and burnt upon the altar, thereby *polluting* it in the grossest manner, before it was destroyed.—Thus was that prophecy fulfilled to the very letter. Turning, accidentally, he saw another place of burial, having an inscription on the front, and inquired of his attendants what it meant. “This,” they replied, “is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel!” “Let him alone,” said the king, “let no man move his bones.” From Josiah’s taking this circuit through the *land of Israel*, it appears that he had some authority beyond the ancient dominions of Judah. Some Israelites yet lingered in their beloved land, although the great mass of the nation had been carried into Assyria, and these, perhaps, submitted to his sway.

All Judah, and every part of Israel, to which the persevering king had access, being thoroughly cleared of

pagan altars, and images, and groves, and high places, a passover was held, at the legal season, which for pomp and solemnity, exceeded all that had been celebrated since the days of Samuel.

From the time of this passover in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, we have no account of his actions until the thirty-first; when his life was unhappily terminated by his imprudent opposition to the king of Egypt. There is every reason for believing that his administration was always upright.

In this interval the Medes and Babylonians having verified the prediction of the Jewish Seers,* by the destruction of Nineveh, Babylon, its ancient rival, became "the queen of the east"—the sole metropolis of Assyria, and the centre of political power. The neighbouring states beheld the colossal empire with dismay, and Necho, the king of Egypt, resolved to check its growing greatness by seizing on Carchemish, a considerable city on a branch of the Euphrates. The route of the Egyptians lying through the dominions of Josiah, that monarch, either indignant at the march of a foreign army through his empire, or actuated by a sense of obligation to Assyria, by whose clemency the eastern provinces had been held since the restoration of Manasseh, took the fatal resolution to oppose their progress, and unhappily perished in the attempt. Unhappily, indeed, for his country—for the glory of Judah expired with the last of her religious kings.

The loss of this excellent prince was deeply felt by the whole nation, whose mourning was so great and universal, that "the mourning of Hadadrimmon"† the place where he received the wound of which he died, became a national phrase to express the greatest excess of sorrow. The prophet Jeremiah, especially, who had found in Josiah at once the pious pupil and the princely protector, foreseeing the evils which his successors would bring upon their people, and the train of calamities which awaited them, lamented his death in a pathetic elegy, which he composed

* Especially Nahum and Zephaniah—see Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 149.

† Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo.

for the public singers; and it continued to be sung for ages in commemoration of his extraordinary virtues.

Catherine. Is it not that beautiful strain which is called the Lamentations of Jeremiah?

Mother. Some commentators are of that opinion, others suppose that on Josiah to be lost; and this which remains, to refer rather to the general desolation of their country, which is as clearly and particularly foretold in this mournful song as it is in his prophecies. The former opinion, however, may well be supported in the consideration of the vast importance of the life of Josiah to the welfare of the state, and the very different characters of his sons, who were to disgrace a throne which he had surrounded with splendour.

Jehoahaz, his son, had worn the crown but three months, when Necho, returning elated with success from his expedition against Carchemish, and deriving a pretext from the hostility of the late king, despatched a party from Riblah in Syria into Judah, seized Jehoahaz, loaded him with chains, and sent him to Egypt, where he ended his life! Proceeding then himself to Jerusalem, he exacted a tribute in gold and silver of the people, and set Eliakim, a brother of the late king, upon the throne, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

Charles. I do not see how the poor Israelites, so continually drained by their enemies, were yet able to bear such enormous impositions.

Mother. The public treasury was often exhausted: it seems now not to have been in a very flourishing state, for this tribute was raised by a rigorous taxation of all the inhabitants of the land.

The new king was altogether destitute of the talents and virtues of his father: the people returned to their accustomed vices, and the prophets admonished them in vain. Habakkuk flourished at this time, and declared the sad consequences of their sins in the most affecting terms. Jeremiah, especially, was commanded to go to the palace, and remind the king that his father acted uprightly, "therefore it was well with him"—and tell him, that unless he also did execute justice and judgment, "and deliver the spoiler out of the hands of the oppressor, that he should

be led away captive and see his native country no more;" and afterwards to go into the temple, and declare to the hollow-hearted worshippers the judgments which their violence and injustice, their oppression of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, their contempt of the Sabbath, their covetousness and pride, were bringing down upon the land—intreating them to repent, and receive mercy and pardon whilst yet it was offered. But so long as they were not charged with profaning the sanctuary, by setting up idols in the place of Jehovah, the priests considered immorality but a venial crime, and quickly pronounced a sentence on the man who had dared to devote that august edifice to destruction. Undaunted, however, by their menaces, he told them he was in their hands, and they might do as it pleased them to him,—“but know ye for certain,” added he, “that if ye put me to death ye shall bring innocent blood upon your heads, and upon this city; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.” “Therefore, now amend your ways, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and he will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.” Several princes and elders, who, (fortunately for the prophet,) were present, interposed in his behalf, although about the same time they united with the reprobate king in bringing back another prophet from Egypt, whither he had fled for security, and put him to death for having declared the same things!

Nor was this faithful minister contented with revealing these general indications of the wrath of heaven against this obdurate people; but with a solicitude for his countrymen, more ardent as they became more callous to his pathetic exhortations, and more obstinate in their sins, he told them that Jehoiakim, their king, should die without pity, “and be cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem,” without respect to his exalted rank, or the common decency of a grave: and, moreover, that his successor, with all his family, should be carried away to Babylon, and all Judah go into captivity. Nevertheless, that the purposes of Providence, in the preservation of that “peculiar people,” might be answered, he comforted the faithful few with the assurance that they should never be scattered amongst the

nations, to the total destruction of their name, but return to their own land after seventy years of correction for their sins.

Fanny. Did all this make no impression on the hardened monarch or his court?

Mother. No other than to provoke them to imprison the courageous prophet, on the accusation of favouring the king's enemies, and disheartening the people from defending the city against Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who, by the death of his father, had fallen heir to a vast empire, containing Chaldea, Assyria, Syria, and Palestine,* and having extended his conquests, and beaten the king of Egypt, was now invading Judea.

Catherine. The prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, particularly, containing a great many separate predictions, could not all be delivered to the people at large: by what means, then, did they become acquainted with them?

Mother. After they had been orally delivered, the prophet himself wrote a copy, and put it up at a public gate of the temple, for the inspection of every passenger. Whilst Jeremiah was in prison, he was commanded by God to collect all that he had delivered from the commencement of his ministry, and copy them into one roll. Having done this, he sent Baruch, a scribe, to read it to the whole assembled people, on the annual day of atonement. The following year the city was taken, the temple plundered, and great numbers of people were sent off to Babylon, amongst whom were several princes of the royal family. The king himself was put in irons, but released on his promise of fidelity to Nebuchadnezzar.

With the captives, an order was sent to Babylon to select some of the most intelligent and handsome youths for the personal service of the king, and immediately to commit them to masters of the laws and language of the Chaldees, that they might be qualified for their distinguished lot.

The famous Daniel, and his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, more familiar to us under the names they received from their conquerors, of Shadrach,

* Prideaux, vol. I. p. 52.

Meshech, and Abednego, were amongst the favoured scholars.

These events occurred in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The king being now a vassal to the crown of Babylon, his princes carried into slavery, his dominions under tribute, and other circumstances corresponding with Jeremiah's prediction of the seventy years' captivity of Judah, have decided some of our best chronologers to date its commencement from this first capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar.

Catherine. Did the prophet himself so explain these events to the king?

Mother. It does not appear that he did; but he continued his entreaties with both people and prince, to "turn every one from his evil way," and avert the wrath of heaven from their afflicted country. And when we read over the eloquent pleadings of Jeremiah, to *us* they seem resistless. But the corrupt habits of the Jews were too deeply rooted to be changed. They were willing, however, to pay a price for their darling indulgences, and accordingly appointed a solemn fast, to deplore their calamities. The indefatigable pastor, now liberated from his prison, took advantage of another season of apparent humiliation,—and when a great concourse of persons were assembled, he sent Baruch up to the temple to read a second time publicly, the awful judgments which threatened their devoted land, and the merciful invitations to return to their heavenly Father. Neither the king nor his councillors were present, but they were speedily informed of what was passing in the court of the temple: the latter were alarmed, and, summoning the orator into their chamber, respectfully listened whilst he read the roll, and then advised him to conceal himself, together with the prophet, until they should try its effect upon the monarch.

It would seem hardly possible that Jehoiakim should yet be unmoved, by what had already come to pass, and the yet more frightful aspect of the future. But so it was;—hastening on his own ruin, indignation alone was excited, and the sacred roll was committed to the flames by the hands of Jehoiakim himself, and an order immediately issued for the apprehension of Jeremiah and his secretary;

but, already concealed by their friends, they escaped from his meditated violence.

The burning of the roll was but an aggravation of Jehoiakim's guilt. To us the loss is repaired by a second copy, dictated by the prophet and written by his secretary, containing the same words, and also much additional matter. This second roll was laid up with the national archives, and is that book of Jeremiah which has been handed down to us.

Notwithstanding all these convincing evidences of his impending fate, the king of Judah continued to harden himself in iniquity, and in three years provoked Nebuchadnezzar to send another army against Judea, which harassed him for three years. Jehoiakim was at length slain, and his dead body contemptuously cast out of the city gates without burial, after a turbulent and inglorious reign of eleven years; thus fulfilling, literally, the prophecy of Jeremiah.*

Jehoiachin, his son, ascending the throne, and the city still more closely besieged, after having been three short months amused with the semblance of a crown, he was compelled to take leave of his palace and deliver himself up, with his mother, his princes, and his servants, to the conqueror, whence he was carried in chains to Babylon. On this second capture of Jerusalem, the palace and temple were despoiled of their treasures, many of the golden vessels were seized and cut in pieces, and all the nobility, the army, and artificers, to the number of eighteen thousand persons (three thousand having been sent out of the country before the fall of the city), were carried away, leaving only the meaner classes of the people. (B. C. 599.) Over this miserable remnant, Mattaniah, the uncle of the late king, was constituted a sort of chief, with the empty title of king, and his name was changed to Zedekiah. This name, signifying *the justice of the Lord*, was designed to keep him in mind of the vengeance that would

* "In the last year of Jehoiakim's reign was born Cyrus, the famous founder of the Persian monarchy, and the restorer of the Jews to their country, their temple, and their state."—*Prideaux*.

follow his violation of the oath which had bound him a vassal to Babylon.

Catherine. What became of the prophet Jeremiah—was he included in this sad deportation of the principal men of Jerusalem?

Mother. He was still left by Providence to serve an unworthy master. The Babylonians having left Jerusalem, a deputation came from several neighbouring kings, all tributaries of the great Nebuchadnezzar, to engage Zedekiah in a revolt from that monarch. Whereupon, Jeremiah was commanded to make “yokes and bands,” and send them by the ambassadors, to their several masters, commanding them to say, when they delivered these expressive emblems, that “the Lord of the whole earth had given their dominions to the king of Babylon”—that submission would be beneficial to their people—but, on the contrary, revolt would involve them in utter ruin. And by the same arguments he persuaded the king of Judah not to listen to those who would but hasten his destruction.

Catherine. Of what use was the advice of Jeremiah to idolators unacquainted with the Supreme Being in whose name he addressed them?

Mother. It did not, indeed, produce obedience to his commands; but these divine messages, together with their continual intercourse with the Jews, were calculated to show them the difference between their graven images and the supreme Jehovah, and left them without excuse when the predictions were fulfilled.

A messenger from Zedekiah to the king of Babylon, in the second year of his reign, afforded an opportunity to the active and benevolent Jeremiah to write to his unhappy countrymen, expostulating with them on the folly with which they had listened to those who falsely prophesied a speedy restoration to their own land; assuring them, the appointed seventy years would not be diminished, and advising them to consider themselves as settled inhabitants in the dominions of the conqueror, and ameliorate their deplorable misfortune as well as they could, by application to business and obedience to the laws.

And farther to console them in their present sufferings, and give them confidence in his advice, in the fourth year of Zedekiah, he wrote that ample prediction of the fall of their oppressors by the Medes and Persians, which we have in the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah; and sent it into Babylon, with a charge to the messenger to read it publicly, on the bank of the Euphrates, and then binding it to a stone, to cast it into the river,—denoting by this significant action, that so Babylon should sink, to rise no more.

In the fifth year of Zedekiah, the miserable captives were comforted by an eminent prophet amongst themselves, EZEKIEL, who had been carried from Jerusalem with king Jehoiachin. He was this year commissioned to preach resignation to his countrymen—and to promise to the penitent, a return to their own land. The subsequent fall of Jerusalem, the dreadful end of Zedekiah, and the utter desolation of the whole land of Israel, were revealed to Ezekiel, about this time.

The utter ruin of Judah being the determined object of the insatiable Nebuchadnezzar, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, Jerusalem was again menaced by another Babylonish army. The inhabitants, in great consternation, made a show of repentance by a partial reformation of the abuses in which they had long indulged.

The near prospect of servitude to themselves, now brought them to reflect on the injustice they had exercised towards their servants, whom they had detained beyond the seventh year, the time of release prescribed by the Mosaic Law. In a moment of terror, these injured persons obtained the liberty to which they were entitled, and both the king and the people entered into a formal covenant* to revive the neglected institutions of their still venerated Legislator. But the apprehended siege being suspended awhile by the march of Nebuchadnezzar against the neighbouring princes, who, together with Zedekiah, had manifested a disposition to rebel against their tyrant,—no sooner was the pressure removed, than the liberated

* A covenant was made by dividing an animal in two parts, and the covenanting parties passing between the separated parts.

servants were again brought into bondage by their late masters.

Once more the intrepid Jeremiah was commissioned by the Moral Governor of the world, to tell the hypocritical king, that for this gross act of perjury and oppression, in refusing liberty to their brethren—"liberty was proclaimed to the sword, to the pestilence, and to famine,"—"that the king of Babylon should return, Zedekiah and his people be given into his hand, and their cities be burnt with fire, and remain without an inhabitant."

Disheartened, at length, by the total insensibility of both king and people, and knowing that the evils he had been threatening for more than forty years, were now fast approaching, the prophet determined to abandon them to their fate, and provide for his own safety by retiring to Anathoth, his native city. But, always obnoxious to the resentment of the people by the faithful discharge of his duty, his quiet departure was now made the pretext for seizing him as a deserter to the Chaldeans; insulting him even with blows, and confining him in the house of one Jonathan, a scribe—which was at that time the common jail of Jerusalem.

Charles. What do you mean by a scribe?

Mother. A scribe, in the commonwealth of Israel, was equivalent to a lawyer with us. They were the expounders of the law, and writers, as we see in the instance of Baruch, who wrote the prophecies from the dictation of Jeremiah.

Before the conclusion of this ninth year of Zedekiah, the appearance of a Chaldean army before the walls of Jerusalem, convinced him of the wickedness and folly of wasting that time in the persecution of the prophet, which ought to have been employed in providing against an enemy whose perseverance and power he had already experienced. The city was rigorously besieged—provisions soon became scarce—and the terrified king, whom no argument could move, whilst he wickedly believed himself secure, had Jeremiah brought from the prison, to try whether he would yet soothe his apprehensions by prophesying "smooth things."

The divine oracle varied not—Zedekiah was to fall into the hands of the king of Babylon : but adversity, which is seen to soften the most obdurate, inclined him to listen to the entreaty of the prophet not to remand him to the common jail of felons ; he was therefore confined in the guard-house of the court—and allowed a daily portion from the scanty stock of bread which yet remained to flatter their delusive hope of resisting the mighty monarch with success. This favour, however, was withdrawn, when pestilence and famine spreading universal distress over the mourning streets of Jerusalem, he was again called upon for a word of hope and comfort from the Lord. No abatement or disguise of the unalterable decree being allowed—nor any alternative but to perish in the city, or to save their lives by going out and surrendering themselves to the besieger, the exasperated princes denounced their best friend, as an enemy to his country, who weakened the hands of her defenders by his terrifying predictions, and threw him into a deep and noisome dungeon, where he must have perished inevitably, but for the compassion of one of the king's servants, who obtained for him the privilege of a transfer to his former prison.

Whilst the holy city was in this miserable state, Ezekiel, in Babylon, declared the judgment of God against the proud city of Tyre, for exulting in the calamities of his fallen people, not less than for their own luxury and pride, and foretold the same destruction to them, from the same unrelenting hand.

About this time, another triumph was revealed to Ezekiel—the entire conquest and desolation of Egypt—Egypt, one of the most ancient and celebrated of nations, the cradle of learning, yet the nursery of superstition and idolatry the most monstrous, that ever debased the known world, or exhibited the weakness of the human intellect.

Catherine. Prophecy is a most interesting subject : whenever you speak of a prediction, I wait with impatience to hear of its accomplishment.

Mother. The annals we are studying afford me many opportunities of gratifying your desire, as you have seen in many instances. In our brief view of the Jewish history, I notice chiefly such prophecies as illustrate the lead-

ing fact—the constant and visible interposition of Providence in the affairs of this remarkable nation.

We left Zedekiah, the last descendant of David that ever wore a crown, in trembling apprehension of his impending fate. Deaf to the entreaties of Jeremiah, to throw himself on the mercy of the conqueror, he persisted in defending Jerusalem about a year from the beginning of the siege. Their provisions being then exhausted, and the enemy in possession of one gate of the city, the despairing king collected his family and chief warriors, and attempted to escape towards Jordan by night, by a private way through his gardens. He was overtaken in the plains of Jericho, seized, and carried immediately to Riblah, where the king of Babylon then held his court.

His rebellion and perseverance had exasperated the tyrant, and his obstinate contempt of the prophet's gracious messages left him nothing to hope. His sons, and his officers, were slain in his presence: his own eyes afterwards being put out, he was sent to Babylon in chains, and ended his life in a prison; circumstantially fulfilling the prediction of Ezekiel, that he should die in Babylon, though he should not *see* the place! (B. C. 588.)

The rage of the Chaldeans now fell on the holy city. The houses, the palaces, and walls were either burned, or levelled with the earth. Nor did their magnificent temple obtain more consideration. The silver, the brass, and the gold, that had been lavished in decoration, with every thing valuable that could be found, was carried away, and the sacred edifice itself was left a heap of ruins!

But these barbarians, who did not venerate the temple of Jehovah, paid much respect to his prophet Jeremiah, whilst they were either slaying or sending into captivity the inhabitants of both town and country.—Either mistaking his advice to the fallen king, as an intended service to their master, or subdued by the majesty of his inflexible virtue, they obeyed the command of the heathen monarch to take him out of his prison—furnish him with necessities, and leave him at liberty to choose his own dwelling. If he would go into Babylon, he was promised sustenance and protection—or if he chose to remain in his own country, he might at will select the place of his residence.

His country, though in ruins, being preferred, he was sent to Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor of the vanquished land, with a charge to make the venerable sage the object of his particular care.

Fanny. Of what use was a governor in a land stripped of its inhabitants?

Mother. The fertile fields of the "delightful land," were yet covered with grain: the famine which contributed to the ruin of the rebellious city, was occasioned by the straitness of the siege—not by the poverty of the country, although it had suffered by the ravages of a hostile army. The vine and the olive tree, yet yielded their fruit: and to gather these in their season, as many as were necessary of the meanest of the people, from whom Nebuchadnezzar apprehended no ambitious projects, were suffered to remain under the government of Gedaliah, who generously assured them of protection. But ambition, it would seem, will never want a place to imagine her mischievous schemes. Whilst the late war had more or less agitated the whole country, many of its inhabitants, together with small bands of the broken army of Zedekiah, had fled into the neighbouring states. Many of these, when they heard that the Chaldean troops had retired, and that a man of probity was appointed governor, returned to their homes, and promised allegiance to the king of Babylon. But unfortunately for them, a prince of the royal blood named Ishmael, who had taken refuge with the king of Ammon, a tributary likewise of Babylon, was encouraged by that prince, to obtain the supremacy of Judah, by the murder of Gedaliah. With this design he came with a number of the refugee officers, to visit the viceroy at Mizpah, where he had fixed his residence, affecting submission to their ruler, and whilst they were courteously received and entertained at his table, the unsuspecting governor fell a victim to their treachery! The chief number of the people who had returned into Judah, being absent from Mizpah gathering the vintage, all who remained about the person of Gedaliah, both Jews and Chaldeans, were also put to death. Instead however of prosecuting his claim to the crown, the fears of Ishmael now prompted him to take all the women and children, amongst whom

were the daughters of Zedekiah, who, in the confusion of his flight, had been separated from their father, and fly with his party into Egypt. Here, again, the aged Jeremiah was taken prisoner, and carried off by the assassins, but before they had proceeded far on their march, they besought him to supplicate heaven in their behalf, solemnly declaring they would obey his directions. Nothing however was less their intentions, for when they received in answer, a command to remain in their native country, and a promise of mercy and favour if they did so—they contemptuously replied, that this was not the voice of Jehovah, for they had prospered when they burnt incense to “the queen of heaven,” and therefore they would resort to her altars in Egypt. To Egypt therefore they went, taking the prophet along with them—but not without being told, that the impious idolatry they still cherished in their hearts, had brought upon them all the evils they lamented—that famine and the sword should not cease to visit them in Egypt, until they were humbled—and that Pharaoh himself should be given into the hand of his enemies.

From this descent into Egypt, Jeremiah is no more spoken of. That he died in Egypt, seems certain; for he was far advanced in years at this time. Profane authors assert, that he was stoned to death by his countrymen, for troubling them with his preaching against their heathenish practices; others impute his death to Pharaoh, because he foretold the downfall of his kingdom.

Thus the government of the Israelites was completely dissolved, about nine hundred years after they were collected into a nation by Moses; and had possessed the “promised land” eight hundred and sixty years.

From the time of this complete conquest of the Holy Land, this venerable people have never become, again, independent. The two tribes—those of whom we have last spoken, were restored to their country at the end of the appointed seventy years, as we shall see by and by. They were indulged with a subordinate government of their own: but they were subjected, successively, to the Babylonians, the Persians, the Macedonians—and lastly to the Romans. They are now, as well as their brethren, the Israelites, scattered throughout the world.

DANIEL.*

Mother. Whilst their native country was thus falling into ruin, the Jewish captives Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were advancing to eminence in Babylon. (B. C. 607.) They were selected from the principal families of Judah for the beauty of their persons, and educated for the personal service of the monarch. Their progress in the language and science of the Chaldees, together with the virtue and piety of their character, had obtained the respect of the officer who had them in charge—when the court was thrown into great agitation by a dream of Nebuchadnezzar's.

Something of momentous aspect was impressed on his imagination while he slept—his repose was disturbed, but every trace of the vision had escaped! In vain he endeavoured to recall the portentous idea; and in vain he demanded of his magicians, his astrologers, and his sorcerers, at the peril of their lives, both the dream and its interpretation. Neither learning, nor fraud, bringing relief to their perilous condition, they ventured to remonstrate against the arbitrary requisition—professing humbly their readiness to interpret, if the dream itself were related to them. But it was gone—nor could the honours promised as the reward of their skill, induce them to venture on the dangerous project of invention, where the possible recollection of their master might detect the artifice and involve them in destruction. The mighty despot of Asia, accustomed to speak but to be obeyed, became furious by disappointment, and immediately issued an order to put all the *wise men* of Babylon to death!

* To preserve the chronological order of the history, we must here abandon the plan which has hitherto been pursued, of taking the books as they are arranged in our bibles. It is obvious that even the chapters are, in a few instances, not disposed chronologically: for example, the seventh and eighth chapters of Daniel should precede the fifth and sixth.

The high reputation of Daniel and his companions for *wisdom*, brought them within the merciless scope of the decree, nor did their virtues afford a plea of indemnity. But Providence, their director and shield, inspired Daniel with a pious hope of saving both the injured magicians and themselves. Time, therefore, to consider the king's demand, was requested of Arioch, the captain of the guard, who came to arrest them—and the request was granted. Their united prayers for divine illumination were answered—and Daniel was brought into the royal presence, to dissipate the harassing anxiety of Nebuchadnezzar. "Art thou able," demanded the imperious king, "to make known *both* the dream and the interpretation?" "No human penetration, O king!" replied the modest youth, "could discover thy dream; but there is a God in heaven, the revealer of secrets, who has previously revealed it unto me—though not for any merit of my own, but for the benefit of others."

Prefaced by the revelation of a fact distinctly remembered by the monarch, that before he slept, his mind had been ruminating on his conquests, and their bearing on the affairs of other kingdoms—his attention was obtained whilst the orator proceeded, with heavenly wisdom, to portray, in vivid lines, the faded vision. A splendid image, as in his dream, seemed to stand before the perturbed king. Formed of four different metals, each decreasing in value from the head of gold to the feet of iron—it was explained by Daniel to represent the kingdom of Babylon, transcendant in grandeur, or perhaps first in point of time, and three others,* inferior, which should successively arise in "the latter days." "And whilst in his dream he gazed on the mysterious image, a stone," continued the prophet, "was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet which were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away that no place was found

* The Medo-Persian, or the Medes and Persians—the Macedonians—and the Romans.

for them, and the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The mystical mountain, which Daniel interpreted to be a heavenly kingdom, which should "last forever," concerned the haughty monarch but little, whilst the head of gold represented himself, pre-eminent in splendour—"a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven had given power, and strength, and glory." He was awed, indeed, in the midst of his exultation, and acknowledging the omniscience of the God of Daniel, prostrated himself before his messenger, and commanded his servants to bring incense and offer it to him. Nor did he stop at these impious honours, but gave him great presents, and made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon. His friends, too, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, at the request of Daniel, were advanced to posts of honour in the provinces.

Catherine. How did the proud Babylonians endure the advancement of their captives, whom they would very naturally hold in contempt?

Mother. They saw it with indignation and envy, no doubt, for we find them laying hold of an opportunity, afforded by the vain glory of the monarch, soon after to ruin his new favourites.

An immense image of gold being set up by Nebuchadnezzar, in the plain of Dura, and consecrated as an object of religious worship, with great ceremony, in the presence of all the nobles of Babylon, the royal proclamation commanded his subjects, of all languages and nations, to fall down and reverence the golden image, whensoever they "should hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music," on the penalty of being cast into a burning furnace. The unhappy Jews, who were ever prone to idolatry in the days of their prosperity, and had ever returned to their own omnipotent Jehovah in adversity, now completely cured of their passion for the gods of the nations, were soon represented by their enemies as contemners of the royal proclamation; particularly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as the most obnoxious amongst the captives, because they partook of the honours and emoluments of the state. Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest potentate of the east, would not endure

opposition to his will, yet with a show of justice to the accused, he commanded them to be brought into his presence, and inquired of them if they had refused to worship the image he had set up, reminding them of the penalty, and defying the power of that God to whom they might look for deliverance.

With the constancy of determined virtue, they answered the king that they would bow down to no idol whatsoever, but if they must suffer for their religion, the God whom they served was able to deliver them; and in him they would put their trust. This bold declaration provoked an immediate order to bind these three men hand and foot, and cast them into the furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual. The furious anger of the affronted king admitted of neither palliation nor delay; but what was his astonishment, and that of the princes and nobles who surrounded him, when they beheld the objects of their rage walking unhurt amidst the fiery furnace, and with them a figure of celestial brightness! Subdued for a moment by a sentiment of mingled awe and terror, the mighty monarch advanced to the mouth of the furnace, exclaiming, "ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither."—"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him." To this candid ascription, he added an edict, "That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

Fanny. It would seem scarcely worth while to ask whether Nebuchadnezzar was not now converted to the worship of one God?

Mother. Not yet: for a proud heart, confirmed by an erroneous education, is strong enough to erect a barrier even against a miracle. But it is believed that the last event which is recorded of his life, affecting him personally, made a permanent impression.

Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest warrior of his age, was now the undisputed master of all Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and the celebrated cities of Nineveh and Tyre

having likewise submitted to his arms, the conqueror was in peace and at leisure to embellish and strengthen the metropolis of his great empire. The wonders of Babylon are more like fairy tales than reality, yet their existence is not questioned, for they are very particularly described by ancient writers. You have read of the prodigious walls of Babylon, and her hanging gardens, which were amongst the wonders of the world, and have never been surpassed; her canals, and her palaces, and her superb temple of Belus, in which were placed the sacred vessels obtained by the plunder of the sanctuary at Jerusalem. I will not detain you by repeating what has so often been described, but proceed to the fall of this great prince from the eminence on which he stood after all these great works were completed.

About this time he is represented to himself in a dream, under the figure of a magnificent tree, high and extending, whose branches afforded provision and shade for every creature under heaven! Whilst he gazed on the tree, he saw in his dream "a watcher and an holy one come down from heaven," and command the destruction of the tree and the dispersion of the beasts and the fowls that reposed under its shadow, or had their dwelling in its branches. "Nevertheless" continued the angel, "leave the stump of his roots in the earth, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. To the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." The wise men, as on a former occasion, were summoned to relieve the consternation of the king—but none could interpret the portentous dream, until Daniel was called in. Inspired by a prescience unknown to the Chaldean impostors, he saw the decree against Nebuchadnezzar, and would have declined an explanation: but at length he told him that the tree represented himself, "whose greatness reached unto heaven and his dominion to the ends of the earth;" that he was to be driven from the dwelling of men,

to eat grass with the beasts of the field, until he should know that the Most High was the Supreme Ruler of kingdoms. And whereas the stump being left in the earth was an intimation that he should return to his throne—Daniel ventured, in the conclusion, respectfully and affectionately to advise him to “repent of his sins, and show mercy to the poor,” if he might peradventure avert the dread sentence.

Nebuchadnezzar seems not to have been moved; for at the end of the year, as he walked on a terrace, exulting in the splendour of his capital, and exclaiming, “Is not this great Babylon, which *I* have built by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty!” he was suddenly bereft of his senses, and either wandered into the forests, or was driven out by his servants, who were probably rejoiced to get rid of a master who had oppressed them to aggrandize himself. Seven years, however, he remained in the fields. His reason then returned, and he was restored to his throne, confessing that God the Most High was the Sovereign Disposer of kingdoms and the Ruler of the universe! (B. C. 563.)

Fanny. Did he not relapse into idolatry?

Mother. We have no further account of Nebuchadnezzar; but it is believed that he did not: for this story of his chastisement and repentance is given by his own hand, and he lived but one year afterwards; having reigned forty-five years.

Evil-merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, succeeded to the throne of Babylon, of whose reign but one act is recorded in Scripture. This was the liberation of the captive king of the Jews, Jehoiachim, from his prison, in the sixty-third year of his age. Thirty-seven years of confinement had probably rendered the unfortunate monarch indifferent to the pleasures and charities of life. Such, however, as Evil-merodach could give, he bestowed,—a seat at the table of his master, and an establishment suitable to his rank, together with the precedence of all other princes and nobles then at the court of Babylon.

Catherine. By what motive was the new king induced to show so much kindness to a man who had been so inhumanly treated by his father?

Mother. Tradition ascribes it to his having contracted a friendship for the royal captive, whilst he was himself confined in the same prison by his sire. Sympathy, we know, is the very natural result of similar sufferings. The munificence of the king of Babylon to Jehoiachim was certainly not the effect of his native disposition ; for historians describe him as so vile, that even his own relations conspired with his subjects to put him to death when he had reigned but two years!

The chief object of the *Old Testament* being to record the history of the Jews, that of other nations is mentioned but incidentally, as they were connected with that most favoured people.

The reign, therefore, of one king of Babylon, occupying four or five years after the death of Evil-merodach, is passed over without notice, and the story of Daniel is resumed in the reign of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

In the first year of Belshazzar, the revolutions of empires, which had been revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, under the emblem of a great image of various metals, was repeated to Daniel in a dream, under the similitude of four wild beasts, denoting by their different dispositions the prevailing characters of the several nations which should subvert and succeed one another.

Again, in the third year of Belshazzar, the conquest of the mighty empire of Babylon by the Persians, and the subsequent dominion of Alexander the Great, were exhibited in a vision to Daniel, as he walked in one of the royal palaces at Shushan, beside the river Ulai.* (B. C. 553.) "So likewise Ezekiel saw visions by the *river of Chebar*," observes Bishop Newton, "as if the holy spirit had delighted to manifest itself in such retired scenes : and the gifts and the graces of the spirit are often, in scripture language, described by the metaphors of springs and streams of water, than which nothing was more agreeable and refreshing in hot and dry countries."

* See Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 283., where the reader will find a full exposition of the visions of Daniel.

That Daniel was still in the royal service appears from the effects which he says, in his account of these astonishing visions, especially the latter, were produced by them. It is said that he fainted, became sick, and was unable to attend to the "king's business" for some days.

But Belshazzar, devoted to his pleasures, whilst the conduct of the state was directed by Nitocris, his mother, a lady of superior wisdom and courage, was unacquainted with the value of his minister. A war with the Persians was bequeathed to him by his father, and was conducted by the queen-mother with great spirit, during the whole reign of Belshazzar. Babylon at length, a city impregnable as it seemed from its stupendous fortifications—Babylon itself, was besieged by the celebrated Cyrus—and the time was at hand when the judgments denounced by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Daniel, were to overwhelm it. Human prudence or power, in the balance against these, were but as chaff before the wind! The impious prince, however, as confident as careless, made a splendid entertainment for his nobles on an annual festival, and profanely decorated his tables with the sacred vessels of gold from the temple. Whilst they revelled in fearless security, a mysterious hand appeared against the wall opposite to the seat of Belshazzar, and recorded upon it, at once, his reproof and his punishment. All were chilled with amazement, but none could decypher the writing! The wise men were called, but their arts were ineffectual! At this crisis the dismay of the assembly was suspended by the entrance of the dowager queen. Attentive as she had been to the affairs of the empire, she had become acquainted with the singular endowments of Daniel, and now hastened to inform the king, that he who had been called Belteshazzar, and had been honoured "because the spirit of the holy gods was in him, and because he had wisdom and knowledge in understanding visions and "hard sentences," was able to interpret the hand-writing. Daniel was then brought in, and entreated with the offer of distinguished honours to unfold the inscription exhibited on the wall. Give thy rewards to another, replied the unambitious prophet—"yet I will read the writing to the

king, and make known the interpretation." Reverting then briefly to the splendid reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the king's ancestor, and the sad catastrophe which his wanton abuse of the gifts of the Most High, had brought upon him—the intrepid monitor continued, "thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all these things, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven, and hast brought the vessels of his house before thee, and hast drunk wine out of them, and hast praised the gods of gold and silver, which see not, nor hear, nor know, and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." "Then was the hand sent from him, and this is the interpretation. God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Charles. It is wonderful that Daniel had courage to declare such a terrible sentence. He might be sure that a wicked and despotic king would be more ready to punish, than to give him the rewards he had offered.

Mother. Mere animal spirits, my son, do often enable men to perform the most perilous deeds. — But the courage of Daniel was sustained by the Power who communicated the knowledge. Whether Belshazzar had some conviction of this truth, or whether he considered himself pledged by a *royal* promise, he did keep his word. Daniel was instantly arrayed in gold and scarlet, and proclaimed the third ruler in the empire. But Belshazzar was not spared like his grand-father, to be purified in the ordeal of affliction—for in that very night the Persians entered Babylon, and he was slain!

Anticipating the unguarded riotings of this festal day when the Babylonians were known to indulge in intemperance, the sagacious Cyrus had turned off the course of the river Euphrates, which ran through the city into a canal, and now entered with his army by its exhausted channel.* (B. C. 540.)

* This catastrophe occurred just fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem; and here ended the independence of the Babylonian

Catherinc. Mother, you have given the conquest of Babylon to Cyrus—whereas, it is said in our Bibles, that “the kingdom was taken by Darius, the Mede.”

Mother. The affairs of the heathens, as I lately remarked; being mentioned incidentally in the history of the Jews, such notices will often be obscure, and sometimes, to careless readers, may seem even contradictory. We must therefore look to profane authors for aid; and it is a great satisfaction, that we can at all times receive their explanation without impeaching the veracity of the Scriptures. In this instance, I have told you from them, that Babylon was taken by Cyrus. He was the son of the king of Persia, and the nephew of Cyaxares or Darius the Mede, as he is also called; for several names were often given to princes, in the East. Cyrus commanded the forces of Persia, confederated with the Medes, and was the conqueror of Babylon; but, being a prince of great excellence and modesty, he assumed nothing to the honour of his own name, but placed all his conquests to that of his uncle Cyaxares.

The dominions of Darius being now greatly enlarged, he divided them into one hundred and twenty provinces, each having its governor,—and over the whole, three presidents. The wisdom and integrity of Daniel having been proved, during more than sixty years that he had been employed by the court of Babylon, were so highly esteemed that he was advanced to the first rank of the three. But envy, which respects not superiority of talents or virtue, was soon at work to undermine Daniel in the favour of the new prince. Invulnerable in his public character, his religion presented a point which might perhaps be attacked with success. Flattered with this hope, the malicious courtiers applied to the king for a law, recommended,

empire. The time had been foretold by Jeremiah. “It shall come to pass when *seventy years* are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon.” The magnificent city suffered considerably at this time, and the country was inundated by the new course of the river: so that here we may fix the beginning of that utter desolation to which they were devoted—and which was subsequently completed. See Prideaux, vol. i. p. 150.

as they told him, unanimously by the nobles, to prohibit every man in his realm from making any petition, save only to the king, for the term of thirty days; on pain of being cast into a den of lions. Accustomed as were the princes of the East to the most excessive adulation, the unsuspecting Darius accepted the impious compliment, and put his signet to the edict: but what was his horror when he discovered the real object of his wicked ministers, in their speedy information that Daniel, the first president, contemning his authority, persisted in offering petitions to his God, every day; and was thereby obnoxious to the penalty of the law! Deeply afflicted, that he had been thus ensnared to the ruin of his invaluable servant, the king made every effort in his power to save him; but still pressed by the enemies of Daniel, with the proverbial immutability of the laws of the Medes and Persians, he was at last forced to behold him cast into the den of lions, and to put his own signet on the door—yet consoling both himself and the venerable sufferer with the pious hope, that “the God whom he served, would deliver him from injury.” After a night of sleepless anguish, the monarch hastened early in the morning to the den, and calling with a melancholy voice inquired of “the servant of the living God—if the God whom he served was able to deliver him from the fury of the lions?” The wonderful preservation of the prophet attested by his own tranquil answer—that his “God had shut the mouth of the lions,” was received with great joy by Darius, who immediately committed the accusers of Daniel with their unfortunate families to the hungry beasts, who had spared the innocent victim of their malice; whilst he confessed the sovereign power of the Most High, in an edict commanding his subjects to fear and honour “the God of Daniel.”

Fanny. While individuals were in such high estimation with the kings of Babylon—how were the captive Israelites generally treated?

Mother. They seem to have been treated with lenity, for many of them amassed wealth, and they were allowed to observe their own laws so far as they were compatible with their subjection to a foreign prince, under a subordi-

nate government of their elders, the chief of whom was denominated "the Head of the Captivity."

Darius the Mede enjoyed the throne of Babylon but a few years. Cambyses the king of Persia dying about the same time, the gallant Cyrus having married the princess of Media, united the two crowns, and became the monarch of the most extensive empire that had yet been erected in the eastern world.

Charles. Did a change of rulers make a change in the fortunes of the prophet Daniel?

Mother. Each successive monarch seems rather to have treated him with additional respect. As an interpreter of dreams, he would naturally be venerated by a superstitious people—and now his long experience in politics, together with his late miraculous deliverance from the lions, would recommend him to Cyrus as a counsellor pre-eminent in value, and one whose favour with heaven would invoke blessings on his government.

The meridian of prosperity, however, which irradiated his own days, did not make him forgetful of the adverse condition of his brethren. Fervent and unceasing in his prayers for their deliverance, he was favoured in a vision with a view of the political revolutions in which they were interested; and trusting implicitly in the word of Jeremiah, which had distinctly numbered seventy years as the term of their captivity, he became more earnest in his supplication as the appointed time drew near.

In the first year of Darius, he received that most remarkable prophecy of the seventy weeks, as it is called, which is recorded in the ninth chapter of his book—an explicit promise of the restoration of the temple, and the advent of the Messiah—the rock which Nebuchadnezzar had seen "cut out of the mountain without hands." Indeed, all the prophecies of Daniel are so clear and circumstantial, that infidels have been obliged to resort to the denial of their having been delivered before the predicted events came to pass. But of this we are sure, that they were perfectly well known a very long time before their accomplishment.*

* "With respect to the particular prophecy (Dan. xi.) relating to the kings of Syria and Egypt, which Porphyry affirms was written after

By the captive nation, the accession of Cyrus must have been hailed with delight. Sadly had they counted the days and years of their banishment from their native country. The seventy years of their sentence were now numbered, and, by a wonderful arrangement of that Providence which still regarded them as the adopted children of the promise, at the same moment a prince who had been named as their liberator above an hundred years before his birth, ascends the conquered throne of their oppressors! His mild and lofty character, too, was a happy omen that in Cyrus they indeed beheld the "Deliverer." The antitype of that elegant apostrophe of the prophet:—

"How beautiful appear on the mountains,

"The feet of the joyful messenger; of him that announceth peace!

"Of the joyful messenger of good tidings!

"Of him that announceth salvation!

"Of him that sayeth unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"*

the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, we may remark that the book of Daniel was translated into the Greek language one hundred years *before* he lived; and that very translation was in the hands of the Egyptians, who did not cherish any great kindness towards the Jews and their religion; and those prophecies which foretold the successes of Alexander, (Dan. viii. 5. xi. 8.) were shown to him by the Jews, in consequence of which he conferred upon them several privileges."

Horne's Introd. vol. 2. p. 299.

* Lowth's Isaiah.

EZRA.

Mother. Beginning the computation of the seventy years' captivity with our most esteemed chronologists, from the first taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; it was exactly concluded in the first year of the reign of Cyrus; and in strict accordance with the prophecy, in that very year, we find the royal rescript for the release of the Jewish nation, with authority to rebuild their temple, and a recommendation to his subjects, to promote his beneficent intentions by a contribution of whatsoever might be of use to the liberated people.

Fanny. The divine decrees being usually brought about by second causes, we may very naturally inquire into the motives which induced the king of Persia to re-people a city whose rebellious disposition had been so troublesome to his predecessors.

Mother. Whilst the dispersion of the Jews was a chastisement for their sins, it was happily calculated to disseminate the knowledge of the true God, in opposition to the false deities of their conquerors. Their steady refusal to worship idols, and the miraculous preservation of individuals, in the persecution to which that refusal had subjected them, had compelled the heathen monarchs to confess that the God of Israel "did according to his will, in the army of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth." By these means the heart of Cyrus might be prepared to lend an obedient ear to his prophets. Nor could he read without emotion, that remarkable prediction, in which he was pointed out by name, as "the Shepherd of the Lord, who should perform all His pleasure—who should subdue nations before Him—who should build up His city and let go His captives."* That he had seen the prediction, we are told by Josephus, a Jewish historian; and so it might be assumed, because the words of Isaiah are recited in

* Isaiah, xlv. 28, and xlv. 13.

the proclamation—and that they were shown to him by Daniel, who, as first minister of the empire, would have access to the king, and who was intent on the subject, is highly probable.

The order for their emancipation being published, the Jews were collected, to the number of nearly fifty thousand, from all parts of the empire, and set out joyfully for Jerusalem, with their camels and other beasts of burden, laden with the gifts of their brethren who did not join them at this time. (B. C. 536.) But the most precious articles which they carried were the gold and silver vessels of the temple. Five thousand four hundred of these were brought forth from the house of Baal, and delivered to Zerubbabel, (or Sheshbazar, as he was called by the Babylonians), a grandson of Jehoiachim, and now by Cyrus appointed governor of Judea.

The particular description of persons, which we have in the catalogue, (Ezra, chap. 2.,) of those who went up to Jerusalem, and their distribution into families and offices—as the princes and the elders—the priests and the Levites—the porters and the singers, attests the sacred care that was taken of the national records, amidst all their calamities; and also of the providential design, that the tribes should be kept separate until “Shiloh should come.” Thus the prophecy (Gen. xliv. 10.,) was progressively fulfilling; and by these public documents, their officers, of every description, could assume their constitutional places, and the families which had been torn from their country, were enabled to return, each to his patrimonial inheritance.

After a journey of four months, through a rough and sterile country, the exiles arrived safely at Jerusalem, their beloved city, in the month Nisam, the first month of their ecclesiastical year,—exemplifying, in their whole march and its happy termination, the exulting anticipation of the prophet, two hundred years anterior to this period:—

“Depart, depart ye; go ye out from thence, touch no polluted thing.

“Go ye out from the midst of her; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of Jehovah!

“Verily not in haste shall ye go forth ;

“And not by flight shall ye march along :

“For JEHOVAH shall march in your front ;

“And the God of Israel shall bring up your rear.”

Thus shall the ransomed of JEHOVAH return and come to Sion with loud acclamation. (*Lowth's Isaiah*, c. li. 52.)

Immediately after their arrival at Jerusalem, the Jews rebuilt the altar for burnt-offerings on the spot where it had formerly stood in the inner court of the temple, and restored the ceremonial rites of their religion : the morning and evening sacrifices were offered—and at the appointed seasons, the feast of trumpets, and the feast of tabernacles were celebrated, and the great day of expiation was religiously observed.

Catherine. Did not the Jews, in this return to their country, bring with them the superstitions of the heathens, as their ancestors had done, when they were delivered from Egyptian bondage ?

Mother. They did not. Nor does it appear that they ever apostatized from their faith, during the whole time of their banishment ; but rather, that this severe judgment was happily the cure of their propensity for idols. In restoring their temple service, they adhered with tenacity to the Mosaic law ; permitting no one to approach the altar who could not prove his genealogy—or descent from the tribe of Levi. Nay, so scrupulous were they now, that they refused the assistance of a neighbouring people, who desired to unite with them in rebuilding the temple, though they professed their devotion to the God of Israel.

Fanny. Was not that a dereliction of the charity and good will which they had been commanded to exercise towards strangers or proselytes ?

Mother. In the Jewish commonwealth, privileges were conferred upon proselytes in proportion to the degree in which they adopted the Mosaic ceremonies and faith. Nor are the laws of other nations less rigid in this respect than were those of this people. We do not at once admit an adopted citizen to all the civil immunities of a native. With them, the civil and religious polity was but one and the same institution. Jehovah was not less their king than their Deity—and the law of his religion was the

civil law of his realm. The temple was the inheritance of the children of Abraham, and none other had a right to the special blessings attached to that holy place.

In the instance just mentioned, the people who would have participated in the re-building of the temple were the Samaritans, who had been placed in the cities of Israel, when the ten tribes were carried away by the Assyrians. No friends to their predecessors in that country—nor sincere worshippers of the God of Israel, they had merely taken Him into communion with their idols. With good reason, therefore, their proffered friendship was rejected.

After having diligently employed the first year of their return, in collecting materials for the temple, and arranging the priests and Levites in their courses for the superintendence of the work, and the continual service of the altar—in the second month of the second year, the foundation was laid with joyful solemnity; the priests in their sacred vestments sounded the trumpet, and the Levites sung alternately to the cymbal, the praises of Jehovah for his returning mercy to Israel. The younger part of the congregation “shouted aloud for joy,” while the ancient men who remembered the glory of the former beautiful edifice, which their barbarous conquerors had laid in ashes, could only answer by their tears!

The restoration of the Jewish state, thus auspiciously begun, while the people were returning to the peaceable cultivation of their lands, and the repairing of their ruined habitations, the real temper of the Samaritans was no longer dissembled; disappointed in their insidious attempt to procure opportunities of impeding the building, by an admission to the confidence of the Jews, they now openly misrepresented the character and designs of the latter at the court of Cyrus, so that the work was retarded greatly, during the whole reign of that prince.

Charles. Where then was Daniel? Had he not power to protect his brethren, in the exercise of the privileges which his influence had obtained?

Mother. The silence of the Scriptures respecting that eminent man, from the date of Cyrus’s decree, together with the vexations to which his brethren were subsequently exposed, seem to warrant the opinion, that he lived not

long after that period. Had he yet held the place of first counsellor to the king—his sagacity would have discovered, and his power defeated the machinations of their enemies.

Cyrus, the benefactor of the Jews, and the excellent prince whose eulogium historians delight to pronounce—lived but seven years after his liberation of the Jews. Dying then in his seventieth year, the two succeeding kings, Cambyses his son, who is called Ahasuerus, in Scripture, and Artaxerxes, who was an usurper, were easily persuaded to discourage the building. Wearied by these vexatious interruptions, the Jews became negligent about the temple, whilst they persevered through every obstacle in rebuilding their own houses. Darius Hystaspes, another king, ascended the throne, yet the Jews did not resume the work, although the edicts against them were annulled by the death of their authors. The displeasure* of heaven became apparent—the fields were blasted with mildew, and with hail—the vine and the fig-tree—the olive and the pomegranate withheld their fruits. Nor were they left to uncertain conjecture, whether these calamities had come to pass in the natural process of human affairs, or whether they were to consider them as the just reproof of an equal providence; the prophet Haggai was sent to inform them, that the languor and indifference which had already taken place of the joyous gratitude with which they had laid the foundation of the house of God, had spread this melancholy aspect on the renovated province.

Thus awakened to a sense of their guilt, the building was resumed, and was going on prosperously, when they were again interrupted by their old enemies in the neighbouring provinces. A decree, however, was in the end obtained from Darius, for the prosecution of the holy work—accompanied with a command to his governors, to supply these vilified Jews with every thing of which they had need, from the public treasury, for the building, together with cattle for the daily sacrifices to the God of heaven—"that they might pray for the life of the king

* Haggai, c. ii.

and his sons;" and for their further encouragement, the prophet Haggai assured them, that "the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former."

Now, liberally assisted by the bounty of a just and clement king, and yet more inspirited by the *King of kings*, the people prosecuted the work with such diligence, that the temple was finished within three years after the commission of Darius, being twenty years from its commencement in the reign of Cyrus. At the pompous dedication of this temple (says the learned Prideaux) "the CXLVI, CXLVII, and the CXLVIII psalms seem to have been sung. For in the Septuagint version they are styled the psalms of Haggai and Zachariah, as if they had been composed by them for this occasion."

Fanny. Did the second temple fulfil the promise of Haggai, in its superior splendour to the temple of Solomon?

Mother. It certainly did; but not in the manner, perhaps, in which you apprehend that prophecy. The second temple was inferior to the first, in the richness and beauty of its decorations, and the prodigious quantity of gold expended in overlaying many parts of that magnificent edifice. The Ark of the Covenant—the Divine Presence which was manifested by a bright cloud over the mercy-seat—the sacred fire which descended upon the sacrifice at the dedication of Solomon's temple—the Urim and Thummim, or breast-plate of Aaron, by which divine counsel was obtained—the sacred oil with which the priests and utensils for divine service, were consecrated—all gave an ineffable sanctity to the first temple which was not communicated to the second; but all these wants and defects were more than compensated, when the *desire of all nations*, the Lord, whom they sought, came to this his temple, and Christ our Saviour, who was the truest *Schekinah* of the Divine Majesty, honoured it with his presence and thus accomplished the promise. (Prideaux, vol. 1. p. 127.)

Whilst their affairs at Jerusalem were thus prosperously going on, the captives who remained in Babylon sent a deputation to the elders, to inquire whether it were yet incumbent on them to observe the annual fasts which had

been instituted on several occasions of great calamity to their nation—such as the destruction of the temple—the murder of Gedaliah, their upright governor, whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over them, and others—all which they had kept during the whole seventy years of their banishment.—The answer to their inquiry, which is contained in the seventh chapter of Zachariah's prophecy, is a lesson not less instructive to us than it was to the formalists of those days : That they had pleased themselves by a show of humiliation, whilst they had neglected the only homage that could be acceptable to the Omniscient Searcher of the heart. "Execute true judgment," said the prophet, "and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow or the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart."

But although the temple was rebuilt, Judah continued in a languishing state until the reign of Artaxerxes. This prince, resuming the kindness which had been shown to the Jews by several of his predecessors, gave a new commission in their favour. He to whom this was directed was Ezra, whose book we have before us, and from whose pen we have the account of these transactions. Ezra was a priest, of great sanctity of life and profoundly skilled in the Mosaic law. The former decrees had enabled the Jews to restore their house of worship ; but this empowered Ezra to appoint magistrates and judges—to enforce "the law of God and the king"—and inflict the severest punishments on the disobedient. The sacred vessels of the temple which yet remained at Babylon, were delivered up to Ezra, besides a very large sum in gold and silver, to furnish him, and all who might desire to go with him to Jerusalem, with all manner of provision for their journey, and offerings for "the king and his counsellors." This commission, too, commanded the king's treasurers of the provinces to give into Ezra's hands whatsoever was commanded by the God of Heaven for "his house, that his wrath might be averted from the king and his sons," and exonerated the priests, with all the inferior ministers of the temple, from the payment of any tribute whatsoever.

Fanny. The Persians, then, it may be presumed, were not idolaters?

Mother. They were yet idolaters, but not of the baser sort. Their adoration was offered to fire; but chiefly to the sun, as the most pure and perfect emblem of the Deity. He, however, was the object of their worship, as you may discover in their desire to conciliate His favour by liberality to His people, and by commanding sacrifices to be offered at Jerusalem in behalf of the royal family.

This commission to Ezra being so much more full and comprehensive than those which had gone before, our best commentators begin here to compute the seventy weeks of Daniel, at the conclusion of which the Messiah should come. (B. C. 457.)

In consequence of this great indulgence to their nation, seventeen hundred and fifty-four Jews repaired to Ezra at Shushan, now the seat of the Persian government, and departed for Jerusalem on the ninth day of the first month. Having before them a long and toilsome journey, and carrying a vast quantity of valuable goods, they encamped at the river Ahava, not far from the city, to implore the protection of heaven from the various accidents to which they might be exposed—particularly the depredations of wandering Arabs, and other hostile tribes. They might indeed have obtained from their munificent king a guard of soldiers, but they had professed to him their confidence in the blessing of God on their undertaking; and therefore they chose rather to attest their sincerity, by committing themselves wholly to his protection. After three days of prayer and fasting, they left the river, and arrived safely at Jerusalem, in the beginning of the fifth month.

The king's letters to his lieutenants being delivered, the gold and silver deposited in the treasury, and sacrifices offered by the returning exiles, Ezra applied himself to the principal object of his journey.

Inquiring into the state of the colony, he learned, to his great grief, that they had already transgressed their law, by intermarriages with the heathens around them, to an enormous extent, and even that the priests were among the offenders!

Catherine. The very sin that had so largely contributed to the calamities from which they had but just escaped!

Mother. No wonder, then, that the pious priest was overwhelmed with astonishment and sorrow, when he heard of their ingratitude to their Supreme Deliverer, and that their reformation, in this alarming particular, should be his first care. Assembled at the evening sacrifice, his earnest prayers in their behalf, and his solemn deprecation of the wrath they had incurred, so deeply affected the whole congregation, that all present who had violated the law, came voluntarily to Ezra, and declared their readiness to put away the strange wives they had taken, and the children who were born of them. Taking them instantly at their word, he exacted an oath that they would abide by their own decision. Judges were then appointed to inquire into the matter, and a proclamation issued, requiring every individual who was implicated to appear at Jerusalem, on pain of confiscation of his property and excommunication from the church of Israel; and after a careful examination, which consumed above two months of time, all the aliens were separated from the congregation.

Fanny. The people of whom you are speaking, being not the individuals who had been carried into captivity, but their descendants, may we not charitably suppose them to have erred through ignorance of the Jewish law?

Mother. We can scarcely suppose them ignorant on this prominent article of their religion, although they may not have been informed on many others. Ignorance, however, would not excuse, but aggravate their guilt, for they were not destitute of the means of instruction. Copies of the Law were carried with them to Babylon, and there, indeed, they were preserved; otherwise, we might have been at this day without a genuine Bible! But, circumstanced as they were, in a heathen land, and far distant from Jerusalem, had the fathers of the church been careful to distribute the sacred books, the people would have known the Law, and would not have corrupted it with traditions, as they did in the captivity. Yet let us not judge them too harshly; we might ourselves, and most probably would, become indifferent, were we, like these poor captives, removed from the possibility of performing the most precious

ordinances of our religion. When we recollect, too, that writings could not be multiplied by them as they can with us, at a very small expense, but only by the labour of copying with the pen, we ought to pity, if we cannot justify, their neglect.

To restore the Mosaic system to its purity, and to teach those who knew it not, Ezra performed a work which at this day demands our thankful recollection. He collected all the manuscript copies of the sacred books within his reach, corrected the errors of transcribers, and settled what we now call "the canon of Scripture," so far as it had been given in his time—that is, the words and the books* which were the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and rejected such as were spurious. Having done this, he copied them out from the Hebrew, the original language of the Israelites, into the Chaldean, which, since their residence in Babylon, had become the vernacular tongue of the Jews.

We have not the express authority of holy writ for ascribing this great work to Ezra. It is the account of respectable Jewish writers, and has been always received by the church, both Jewish and Christian.

Let us now leave the pious priest in the prosecution of his important labours, and return awhile to the court of Persia, where we shall find such events occurring, about this time, as contributed to the singular preservation of the house of Israel.

* The subdivision into chapters and verses, an invention for the more convenient reading of the Scriptures, is of modern date.

Prideaux.

ESTHER.

Mother. We have seen, in the preceding history, several remarkable interpositions of Providence, in favour of the banished house of David, which tended not only to the amelioration of their condition, but to their conservation as a nation. The beautiful story of *Esther*, interesting in itself, and instructive as a lesson to the ambitious, is another instance of that special care which has enabled us at this day to produce the Israelites as an incontestable argument for the truth of Revelation.

Somewhere about this period of the Persian history, Artaxerxes made a great entertainment to celebrate his victories. Not less proud of the uncommon beauty of his queen, than of his success in the wars, Artaxerxes commanded her to appear in his apartments, on this occasion, to indulge his vanity, in the admiration of all the princes and nobles of his realm. But Vashti refused to make such a public exhibition of her person, and her disobedience incurred the instant sentence of deposition.

Neither the plea of female delicacy, nor the adverse customs of the Persian ladies, nor yet the high dignity of her station, extenuated the crime of the unfortunate Vashti: the decree unalterable of the Medes and Persians, was registered against her, and a proclamation immediately went forth to collect the fairest maidens of the realm, that another queen might be selected.

In a kingdom comprising a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and with a prize so resplendent at issue, the court of Ahasuerus would soon exhibit a great assemblage of female charms. Superior in mind, as in person, a young Jewess named Hadassah, had the good fortune to captivate the monarch: the royal crown was placed on her head, and amidst rejoicings and feasting, and gifts to his servants, and the release of tribute to the provinces, she was declared queen instead of Vashti.

Hadassah was the orphan niece of Mordecai, a Benja-

mite, who had adopted, and brought her up. He seems to have held some office about the court, for he is said to sit daily "in the king's gate," whilst he waited with anxiety to know the fate of his fair daughter.

Charles. Was Ahasuerus ignorant of the country of Hadassah, that he took a wife from a conquered people?

Mother. Princes were not so nice in those days as to require a descent from a long line of kings. Personal charms in a consort was very often the single object of their choice; yet Mordecai had charged his niece "not to show her kindred," and perhaps for this reason she was now called *Esther*, a Persian word, which signifies "secret or hidden."

Not long after the advancement of Esther, Mordecai had an opportunity of rendering an important service to the king—no less than the preservation of his life. Associating daily with the officers about the court, he became acquainted with a conspiracy to assassinate the monarch; of which he immediately apprised him through the queen; the conspirators were crucified, and all the circumstances were recorded in the chronicles, or public register of Persia; but Mordecai sat unrewarded at the king's gate! Sooner or later, however, the virtuous deeds of men will find their due reward; already was one prepared in the mysterious counsels of Providence for this faithful servant, by the hand of a man not only his personal foe, but the enemy of his nation.

At this time the royal favour was lavished with unbounded profusion, on Haman, an Amalekite. Elevated above all the nobles of Persia, he received the willing homage of the crowd; for the friendship of princes is the sure path to the obsequiousness of the populace. All bowed to Haman, except Mordecai, whose steady virtue would yield no mark of respect to a base and imperious man, especially to an Amalekite, though the favourite of a powerful king. Enjoying all the honours of a luxurious palace, Haman might well have spared the passing reverence of Mordecai, but his heart swelled with indignation and he determined on revenge. The ruin of an obscure individual, however, was a satisfaction too mean for his lofty pride; it was therefore settled in a consultation with

his friends that the whole nation of the offender should perish together with himself! The daring scheme was not to be undertaken even by this council of demons without due caution: lots were therefore cast for the selection of a day whose auspicious aspect might ensure their success, and the choice fell on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar. This point being settled, Haman proceeded boldly to his royal patron, and with an affected anxiety for the prosperity of his kingdom, represented the unoffending Jews as a dangerous class of subjects who ought to be wholly and at once exterminated—and that he might seem the more disinterested, he offered at the same time to pay from his own purse above two millions of pounds in silver, that the king's treasury might not suffer by a sudden excision of the taxes which were paid by the obnoxious people.

Charles. Two millions of silver!—a princely gift indeed for a subject to present!

Mother. Incredible indeed, with us—but gold and silver in those days were amassed with comparative facility: the monarch however, equally generous, and setting no bounds to his indulgence, at once declined the offer, and delivered up the poor Jews, to be dealt with according to the good pleasure of the petitioner; and in token of his acquiescence, equally barbarous and weak, the royal ring was put on the hand of the vile Amalekite.

Exulting now in the success of his horrible artifice, Haman speedily despatched letters to the officers of every province in the empire, commanding them “to destroy all Jews, both young and old, little children and women in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to take the spoil for a prey.”

Comparatively but few of the Jews had availed themselves of their liberty to return to Jerusalem. A vast number were yet scattered throughout Asia. It would be superfluous to describe the sensation produced by the king's letters. The words of the sanguinary edict are a sufficient exposition of the deplorable case. In Shushan and its vicinity where the greater number, perhaps, were to be found, the mournful wailing of the wretched sufferers, and the deep sympathy of the inhabitants spread a uni-

versal gloom! Mordecai himself put on sackcloth, and with ashes on his head, presented himself before the palace; for in this mourning habit he might not take his accustomed place within the royal gate. All this while the fair Esther shut up in her apartments knew nothing of the perilous condition of her kindred; but the appearance of Mordecai, and the consternation of the city, at length reaching her, she sent out to inquire from her venerable uncle himself.

This was the opportunity he had ardently sought, and now the whole story was laid before her, with a copy of the decree, and the name of its vile projector; accompanied by a solemn injunction from Mordecai, to go in to the king and make supplication for her people. But what could poor Esther do?—By a law of the realm it was death to approach the prince without a special summons, nor could she, more than others, presume on his clemency at this awful moment, inasmuch as she had not been called into his presence for the last thirty days! With this perplexing intimation she sent back her chamberlain to Mordecai: but he bade him return and tell the queen plainly, that “even her exalted station would not protect her from the determined malice of their enemy, that she too was doomed to fall with her father’s house; but that God would in some manner deliver his people; and for aught she knew, his providence had put the means into her hand.” This appeal to the piety of the queen was conclusive: “go and tell Mordecai,” she replied, “to gather all the Jews that are in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days—night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law; and if I perish, I perish!”

The command of Esther was obeyed; and on the third day she herself prepared to execute her heroic resolution. Dressed in her royal robes, she ventured, yet trembling, into the inner court, and stood opposite to the throne, on which Ahasuerus sat, with the golden sceptre in his hand. No fatherly yearning had touched his heart, when his profligate minister had asked the destruction of a nation—but love was stronger than compassion, the beauty of

Esther was irresistible—the extended sceptre pronounced her pardon, and the encouraging voice of the monarch anticipating a request, assured her of its success—even to the half of his kingdom! Strengthening her interest perhaps by exciting his curiosity, she merely intreated that the king would come with his favourite Haman, on the following day, to a banquet which she had prepared. The banquet was accordingly attended; no business was mentioned by the queen, but the invitation was repeated for another day, when she added, she would present her petition.

Fanny. Was Haman yet ignorant of Esther's near relationship to Mordecai?

Mother. He was happily quite ignorant of that circumstance. Retiring from the queen's apartments, he passed the humble Mordecai as usual, without receiving that reverence to which he was accustomed from the populace. Contempt, so often repeated, could no longer be endured. The scorn of one obscure captive hung heavy on his proud heart, and embittered all his enjoyments. Transported with the desire of immediate revenge, he determined not to wait the arrival of the month Adar, which would involve Mordecai in the common destruction of all his people—but instantly sent for his friends, to devise some means to remove at once this corroding thorn in his side. He recounted to them all his riches and his honours, the many favours bestowed upon him by his sovereign, who had advanced him above all his princes and servants, and then told them of the distinction that had marked that very day, when "no man but himself had been admitted with the king to the queen's banquet," and that the invitation was repeated for the next day. After this prelude, he came to the business of the meeting, with the humbling confession, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate!"

Zeresh, his wife, elated by the fine account of her husband's high standing at court, to which she had been listening, and supposing that the trifling boon of poor Mordecai's life could not be refused, advised him to go immediately and erect a gallows, and betimes in the morning obtain the king's warrant to remove his enemy from his sight—then

could he "go in merrily to the queen's banquet." Equally sanguine with his inhuman wife, Haman delayed not to execute her scheme, and anticipated a complete triumph in the morning.

On that memorable night, a superintending Providence—which is always taking better care of us than we can take of ourselves—disturbed the rest of Ahasuerus: he could not sleep. Wearied at length by the vain effort, he commanded his attendants to amuse him by reading to him the chronicle of his reign. Passing unnoticed the events as they occurred, until the reader came to the detection of the conspiracy by Mordecai, his attention was at once arrested. What honours, he inquired, had Mordecai received for this instance of his loyalty? and the answer, "there is nothing done for him," filled his mind with regret and shame. Impatient, then, to expiate his inexcusable neglect, he inquired who waited in the outer court, that orders might be given on the instant. At this critical moment, was Haman found waiting for admission, that he might obtain the royal warrant for the immediate execution of the hated Mordecai! Without hearing what had brought the prime minister thus early to the palace, the king hastily demanded, "what ought to be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour?" "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" thought the vain Haman—"I, who alone am invited to the banquet of my royal mistress!" An opportunity, he now thought, was offered to display his dignities before the multitude, to receive their adulation, and to add to the envy of Mordecai; and certainly no distinction whatever was beyond his desert. Very cheerily, therefore, he replied,—“Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour!" But how were his proud anticipations reversed, when he was commanded

to go himself, and array Mordecai the Jew—to make haste, and let nothing fail of all that he had advised!

From the performance of this command, whilst the humble Mordecai returned to his daily resort before the palace gate, Haman went home, convulsed by mortification and hatred, and related to his wife and friends all the circumstances of his bitter disappointment; nor was it at all mitigated by their apprehensive suggestion, that this might be but the prelude to his fall before the rising fortunes of the despised Jew. Still the unalterable decree, which would afford ample revenge, was before him, and the immediate honour of the queen's second banquet was at hand; and whilst they yet talked over this unexpected turn in their affairs, the king's chamberlain arrived to attend the most noble Haman to her majesty's apartments. Here, whilst they yet sat at table, the king inquired into the object of this formal preparation, and encouraged Esther to speak freely her petition, for it should be granted even to the half of his kingdom.—“Her own life,” at last she declared, “and the life of her people, was her request! For we are sold,” continued she, no longer apprehending his displeasure, “I and my people are to be destroyed—to be slain. But, if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.” The life of Esther—one of the most beloved of his wives! “Who is he, and where is he,” cried the king, in a voice which struck terror to the conscious soul of Haman, “that durst presume in his heart to do so?” “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman;”—was enough for Ahasuerus: but when he whom prosperity has made insolent begins to fall, there is no want of accusers. Harbonah, a chamberlain in waiting, now told of the gallows which Haman had already prepared for the queen's uncle, “who had spoken good for the king;” and the decisive sentence, “hang him thereon,” followed instantly.

Thus fell the insolent Haman, in the full tide of his glory, meditating the sacrifice of thousands to his merciless resentment: while the sackcloth of the devoted Mordecai was exchanged for princely robes of purple, and his head was crowned with a tiara of gold!

Fanny. But how fared the poor Jews, condemned by the king's edict, which might not be repealed?

Mother. Neither the tears of Esther, nor the influence of Mordecai, although his relationship to the queen was now disclosed to the king, could violate a law of the realm of Persia; but they were permitted to send expresses throughout the provinces from Ethiopia to India, with letters under the king's seal, empowering their proscribed brethren to take up arms in their own defence, and to slay all who assaulted them on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and to possess themselves of their effects. Accordingly, on that fatal day, the condition of the Jews throughout Asia was completely reversed; seventy-five thousand of their enemies were slain, "but they laid not their hands on the spoil;" and in Shushan, five hundred more were put to death. Mordecai was advanced to the first place amongst the nobles, and all Shushan rejoiced in the elevation of an upright man.

The fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the month Adar were appointed to continue throughout their generations as a festival* of joy and thanksgiving, for their wonderful preservation, and the Jews now attained so high a standing in Persia that many of the natives became proselytes to their holy religion.

* This festival is called the feast of Purim, and is kept to this day.

NEHEMIAH.

Mother. Conformably with the reputation which the Jews had obtained in the court of Persia, in consequence of the high character of some individuals of that nation, and of Esther's advancement to the throne—we find Nehemiah, (one of the captives,) in the honourable place of cup-bearer to the king.

Without any preparatory circumstance of his life, Nehemiah presents himself, in the commencement of his book, as waiting in his office, on a certain day, with a countenance so dejected, that his royal patron inquired the cause.

Encouraged by this condescension, and by the presence of the queen, he acknowledged that his sadness was occasioned by his having learned from one of his brethren, who had lately returned from Jerusalem, that the province was in great affliction, contending with many difficulties amongst themselves, and exposed to incursions from their enemies, the walls of the city yet lying in ruins. Nehemiah had never himself beheld the celebrated city of David—but it was the country of his ancestors, the consecrated seat of his religion, the object of his solicitude and prayers—and now that a proper opportunity seemed to offer, he ventured to make a request,—respectfully prefacing it with the usual invocation, “let the king live forever,” and mentally praying that the heart of the king might be inclined in his favour, he intreated that he “might be sent to the city of his fathers’ sepulchres, to rebuild the walls, and contribute his mite to the welfare of his people.”

Catherine. Then I presume Ezra had not yet had sufficient time to rebuild the wall, for, provided as he was with facilities, and surrounded by those who were known to be unfriendly to him, he would not have neglected that necessary measure of defence?

Mother. This was now the twentieth year of Artaxerxes; the commission to Ezra had been given in the

seventh, consequently, he had been there about thirteen years; but he had no authority to build the wall. Perhaps the prince in that early part of his reign might have questioned the policy of allowing a people who had been represented as seditious, thus to fortify their capital; and the liberty was withheld, until experience might sanction it. Besides, the duties committed to Ezra were abundantly sufficient to employ his whole time and attention, especially his great work of collecting the sacred books; and the offerings and the contributions which the royal treasurers were commanded to furnish, were chiefly to be applied to the completion of the temple, the maintenance of the priests, and the daily sacrifice.

The request of Nehemiah, however, was readily granted, but the condition was annexed, that he must return to Shushan, at a time agreed upon between himself and the king. He appears to have been a favourite at court, for not only was his return required, but measures were taken to prevent any insult or detention on the way. A troop of horse was ordered to escort him, and letters under the royal seal, were sent by him, to the chiefs whose provinces he must pass through, commanding them to convey him in safety. He was furnished likewise, with an order to the keeper of the king's forests, to provide as much timber as Nehemiah might require for the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and the erection of a house for himself.

Thus respectfully attended, the new governor was received with great cordiality at Jerusalem. Having suffered so much from their troublesome neighbours, all classes of people, both the rich and the poor—the husbandman and the artist, were ready to put themselves under his direction, and unite heart and hand to strengthen the state, by erecting the walls of their capital. An immense multitude being gathered, they were divided into companies, officers appointed to overlook each division, and Nehemiah himself superintending with great diligence, the barriers soon began to rise from their ruins. A work, however, so ungrateful to their ancient enemies, did not go on without interruption. The Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Samaritans, who could not endure the prosperity of Judah,

threw every possible obstruction in their way : insolent messages were unnoticed—and menaces of violence ensued : but undaunted by these, the work was not retarded. Nehemiah provided the labourers with arms, and watchmen, with trumpets to sound an alarm in case of an attack, were placed at convenient distances ; and inspirited, besides, by the exhortations of their governor, they surmounted every obstacle, and the walls were completed, even to the hanging of the gates, in two-and-fifty days !

But notwithstanding the unanimity and spirit with which they triumphed over all opposition from their enemies, dissatisfaction existed among themselves. The poor complained, that a scarcity and consequent high price of provisions, compelled them to borrow money of the rich, on which such exorbitant interest had been exacted, that their lands had been mortgaged, and finally their children were made slaves ! The taking of usurious interest from their brethren was forbidden by the Mosaic law, as tending to destroy that equality which ought in some measure to subsist amongst the members of one family. As soon, therefore, as their complaints reached the ear of Nehemiah, he reproved the oppressors, and obliged them to restore their unjust gains. Indeed, they were ashamed to refuse, with the example of his disinterested liberality before them—an hundred and fifty persons, besides many strangers who visited Jerusalem, being entertained every day at his table, himself and his household devoted to the public works, yet refusing to accept of the presents that had been commonly paid to the governors : nor did he during the twelve years of his presidency receive a salary from the king.

Charles. How then did he support such an enormous expense ?

Mother. He was a man of great wealth, and very cheerfully employed it in the service of his people. Besides the hospitality of his house, he gave from his own purse a thousand drachms of gold, and many other things, to the work in which he was engaged. Others among the principal men following his example contributed large sums of gold and silver. But their governor, above all, was indefatigable in his exertions for the common good.

The sufferers who had lost their houses or their vineyards, being reinstated, and other abuses rectified, the inhabitants, once more in harmony, prepared for a solemn dedication of the new wall. The princes, the Levites, the musicians, and the singers, were all summoned from every part of the country, and, after undergoing the legal purifications, without which they could engage in no religious service, they were distributed in order around the walls, and whilst the priests offered sacrifices, the praises of Jehovah once more ascended from the lofty towers of Jerusalem!

By this time Ezra had finished his edition of the Scriptures,* and when the people assembled at the feast of Trumpets, or the New-year festival, on the first day of the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year, and the first of the civic year, "the Book of the Law" was read to them by the compiler himself, assisted by thirteen of the principal elders; Ezra reading in the original Hebrew, and the elders repeating, period by period, from the Chaldee, into which he had rendered the whole. Here they found that the fifteenth day of the same month was the time for the feast of Tabernacles. This festival, though of all others the most joyous and social, had been wholly neglected from the days of Joshua; but now that a complete reformation was in progress, by the joint labours of Nehemiah and Ezra, the people came willingly from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem, and celebrated this also.

* In this laborious and important work, we are told upon competent authorities, Ezra was assisted by a body of learned men, called the Great Synagogue, which consisted of one hundred and twenty elders. "The truth of this (says Prideaux) seemeth most likely to have been, that these one hundred and twenty men were such principal elders as lived in a continued succession from the first return of the Jews from Babylon, to the death of *Simon the Just*, and laboured, in their several times, some after others, in the carrying on of the two great works above mentioned," (i. e. restoring the correct usages of the Jews, and editing the sacred books,) "till both were fully completed, in the time of *Simon the Just*, (who was made high priest of the Jews in the twenty-fifth year after the death of *Alexander the Great*) and Ezra had the assistance of such of them as lived in his time. But the whole conduct of the work, and the glory of accomplishing it, is by the Jews chiefly attributed to him, under whose presidency (they tell us) it was done: and, therefore, they look upon him as another Moses." *Prideaux*, vol. i. p. 254.

During the whole seven days of the feast, the Book of the Law was read to them day by day until the whole was gone through. In this review of their law they saw much of which they had been ignorant, and much more that they had neglected; and, with one accord, they professed their determination to adopt another course of conduct. Ezra and Nehemiah, therefore, to improve and confirm them in a temper so desirable, appointed a day of fasting, confession, and prayer, after which a formal adoption of the whole Mosaic law took place, and the covenant was solemnly signed and sealed by the princes, the Levites, and the priests, for the whole congregation.

Nehemiah's leave of absence having now expired, he gave Jerusalem in charge to Hanani and Hananiah, two men of distinguished character, and returned to the palace with an account of his mission. After some years, perhaps five or six, he again obtained leave to go and inquire into the affairs of Judea. These particulars are but hinted in his history; but it is highly probable that the king of Persia was not insensible to the benefits which must accrue to his empire, from the skilful efforts of such an upright man as Nehemiah, in promoting order and morality in his distant provinces, and therefore authorized this second visit. It is also probable that the time of his stay at Shushan was considerable, for he found much to correct on his return to Jerusalem. Some had again transgressed the law, by forming connexions with the heathens. The most noted amongst these was Manasseh, a priest, who had married the daughter of Sanballet, the governor of Samaria. He was immediately driven from the sacred order. Leaving Jerusalem, he was received by Sanballat, who obtained a license to erect a temple in Samaria, resembling that in Zion, and Manasseh was constituted the high priest. Samaria then became the resort of apostates; and the mongrel religion which had been adopted by the colonists, after the deportation of the Israelites, in the reign of Shalmaneser, was the religion of Manasseh's temple.

In process of time, however, it was purified from its dross; the statutes of Moses alone were acknowledged: yet the hatred of the Jews to the Samaritans, as we find by the New Testament, still continued.

Another grievous vexation to Nehemiah, was the profanation of the Sabbath, which, in his absence, had gone to a shocking length. Jerusalem again rising into opulence, her commerce with the neighbouring states was revived; the Tyrians, especially, who, in all periods of their history, were celebrated for their extensive trade, again brought in their merchandise. Ability to purchase brings with it a taste for foreign luxuries; the Tyrians could well minister to this, and the Jews were not only tempted to defraud the Levites of their tithes, that themselves might indulge in the rich manufactures of Tyre, but they admitted the sellers to expose their wares on the Sabbath, and even laboured in their own vineyards on that sacred day. To put a stop to such outrages, Nehemiah ordered the gates of the city to be shut and strictly guarded on the Sabbath; the traders then erected their stalls under the walls of Jerusalem on the outside, but this, too, was forbidden; and menaces of seizure and punishment at length obliged them to desist.

Ignorance of the law still prevailed amongst the people; and to this fruitful source of all evil, their transgressions might be generally referred. To disseminate knowledge is the best means to promote virtue, and to this great end Nehemiah next directed his care.

Fanny. How could the people possibly be ignorant with the book of the law in their hands?

Mother. That it was not generally in their hands, was their misfortune. Books of all kinds, in every age and nation, must have been but scarce whilst they could be multiplied only by the pen. It is to the inestimable art of printing that we are indebted for the blessed light of literature: by means of that, the Bible now traverses the globe and illuminates the palace and the cottage. But few of us can extenuate our sins by the plea of ignorance; for, besides the sacred Scriptures we have a thousand helps in our way, the very first of which is, public instruction on the Sabbath.

Catherine. Can you tell us how and when that great benefit originated?

Mother. That is the point to which my remarks were intended to lead you—to the origin of Christian churches, in the synagogues of the Jews, which, about this period of

their history, were instituted as a means of popular instruction. That the churches of the first Christians were but a continuance of the synagogue, where they had been accustomed, before their conversion, to worship, was never questioned, but the precise time of their institution is not so exactly ascertained: to this period of Jewish history they are assigned by the best authorities. They are not mentioned in Scripture until after the captivity, wherefore it is argued that they did not exist. Whether those two enlightened reformers — Ezra and Nehemiah — lived long enough to lend their personal services in the erection of synagogues, we cannot tell; but the conclusion is just, that the pains which they took to bring the common people acquainted with the Scriptures, and the good effects which were seen immediately to flow from the hearing them read and expounded, first suggested this most excellent mode of instruction.

The temple service, although wrapt in obscurity, was calculated to teach them that they were sinners, and stood in need of continual intercession: but those who lived at a distance from Jerusalem would receive but little advantage from attending there but three times in the year; and even at these solemn convocations, the males alone were *commanded* to appear. To these, then, and to the women and children, the synagogue was invaluable; for, placed in all their cities and villages, wheresoever a very small congregation might be collected, they were opened every Sabbath, and frequently throughout the week, and there the sacred books were read and explained, and the assembly united in prayer.

Fanny. Did singing in our manner make a part of the synagogue form of worship?

Mother. Music, both vocal and instrumental, made a part of the temple service, which was altogether imposing and magnificent, and it was used on other religious occasions, and at the celebration of a great national event; but it has never been, so far as I know, introduced into the synagogue.

The great change in the circumstances of the Israelites, on their re-establishment in their own land, is a good reason for referring the institution of some new mode of en-

lightening their minds to this era of their history. From the calling of their father Abraham, to this moment, they had been guided and governed in an extraordinary manner. The Divine Oracle had given them counsel from between the Cherubim—fire from Heaven had testified the acceptance of their oblations—their prophets had been instructed by visions and by dreams—and lastly, they had invariably prospered “in their basket and their store,” when they obeyed the Divine commands, and were as constantly afflicted when they transgressed. All these marks of a direct superintendence were now to be withdrawn, and they were to participate with other nations in that common providence which “sends his rain on the just, and on the unjust.” The Book of the Law was now to be their monitor and their guide; and at this critical juncture, they are provided with the means of becoming acquainted with its precepts. To this judicious measure, it is ascribed, that the Jews were never more chargeable with the sin of idolatry. This had been their besetting sin, and a chief cause of their sufferings. They now saw the denunciations of the law against it in all its righteous terrors, and they could no more be allured to the worship of false deities. Their sacred books became more and more dear to them; they preserved them to the minutest letter with religious devotion, and it is owing to that scrupulous care, that they are handed down to us in their original purity.

Charles. We are more indebted to the Jews than I had supposed. I shall not in future dislike them as I used to do.

Mother. To dislike any class of people, my son, is a breach of that charity which we are commanded to exercise towards the whole world of mankind. The descendants of Shem are entitled to our affectionate regard: if they are now blind to their best interests, let us pity them; but let us not forget their claims to our veneration, enumerated in that pathetic plea of the apostle—“To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever!” (Rom. ix. 4, 5.)

PROPHECY.

Mother. We have now gone through the historical books of the Old Testament, and have concluded the annals of the Jews, so far as they are contained in those books. We have noticed others which, though not strictly historical, were connected with our subject—were written by Jews—and by them were comprised in the sacred canon. The writings of the prophets are of this description. I have noticed them occasionally, but our plan would be incomplete without some further account of their contents. What I shall say must be necessarily imperfect, for these sublime compositions contain a mass of instruction beyond my ability to communicate. To estimate their value, you must read some of those works which pious and learned men have given to the world on this most interesting topic. “Newton’s Dissertations” are very full and satisfactory. He has shown that the history of the nations is the accomplishment of prophecy; and consequently, that the Scriptures were given by Divine inspiration.

All the gentile nations with whom the Israelites had much intercourse, were noticed by the prophets. Their prosperity is described, and their downfall is predicted. We read of many of which there are now no traces upon the earth!

The conquest or the extermination of the Amalekites, the Idumeans, and the Moabites, as foretold by Moses and Balaam, was effected during the reign of the Hebrew kings, or soon after that period. But Babylon and Tyre, Egypt and Nineveh, denounced by later prophets, were spared to fill the pages of profane, as well as sacred history.

Catherine. Did not these mighty states show some symptoms of decay when their ruin was foretold?

Mother. No. They were in the meridian of their glory, and betrayed to the human eye no symptom of decline, from which sagacity might calculate their downfall, unless it might be predicted on their vice and luxury.

Tyre, "the daughter of Sidon," as she is called, and after her the greatest and most ancient city of the Phœnicians—the most celebrated place in the world for its trade and navigation—"a mart of nations, the crowning city, whose merchants were princes, whose traffickers were the honourable of the earth," was consigned to destruction by the prophets Joel and Amos, for her enmity to the chosen people, for exulting in their ruin, and for selling the captives of Judah like the cattle in their markets. Joel says, "the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold; behold I will return your recompense upon your own head; and will sell your sons and your daughters." Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah likewise uttered many prophecies against them. Isaiah, at least one hundred and twenty-five years before the event, declared that Tyre would be destroyed, and Ezekiel expressly names Nebuchadnezzar as the destroyer.

A celebrated writer has comprised the predictions against it in the following particulars: "That the city was to be taken and destroyed by the Chaldeans, who were, at the time of the delivery of the prophecy, an inconsiderable people, and particularly by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; that the inhabitants should fly over the Mediterranean into the islands and countries adjoining, and even there should not find a quiet settlement; that the city should be restored after seventy years, and return to her gain and merchandise; that it should be taken and destroyed again; that the people should, in time, forsake their idolatry, and become converts to the true religion and worship of God; and finally, that the city should be totally destroyed, and become only a place for fishers to spread their nets upon."

Of Nineveh, that immense metropolis of Assyria, it was declared by Zephaniah, in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, that "an utter end" should be made of her; that Nineveh should be "a desolation and dry like a wilderness;" that "flocks should lie down in the midst of her;" "all the beasts of the nations, both the cormorant and the bittern, shall lodge in the upper lintels of it, their voice shall sing in the windows, desolation shall be in the thresholds."

Nahum, whose whole book relates solely to the destruc-

tion of Nineveh, is believed to have prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah. He describes the event more fully than Zephaniah—and his words are literally come to pass.

Babylon, another cruel enemy of God's people, became, for this cause, obnoxious to divine wrath. After Nineveh was destroyed, Babylon became "the queen of the East," and although less in extent, she surpassed her predecessor in splendour. Her public works excelling in strength and grandeur, were justly esteemed amongst the wonders of the world. Yet this stupendous city, whose removal might only be supposed among the possibilities of human power—this admirable city is called under the figure of a proud female "to come down and sit in the dust—for she should be swept with the besom of destruction!" "Her palaces (she is told) should be a den of wild beasts, and be inhabited by men no more for ever!"* The prophecies against Babylon are very numerous† and particular, even to the name of Cyrus, her conqueror, above a hundred years before his birth, and to the manner in which the city should be taken. A second siege of the city, by Darius, after the death of Cyrus, and the cruelties he should exercise on the vanquished people, is also foretold. In the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, the rapt bard, foreseeing, by divine prescience, the ruin of Babylon accomplished, and the proud oppressor of nations broke in pieces, breaks out into that incomparable ode, which is said to have no parallel in the utmost efforts of human genius. Inimitably sublime in thought, and regular in construction, it is called the most perfect model of lyric poetry.‡

Of Egypt too, the inveterate enemy of the Hebrews, and the great academy of the early ages—the prophecies are not less various and circumstantial. Noah had declared that the posterity of *Ham* should "be a servant of servants;" and now Ezekiel tells them,—they "shall be the basest of kingdoms, and governed by strangers." Another event, most unlikely to happen in a country debased above all others by the grossest superstitions, it was

* Isaiah, in a variety of places.

† See Jer. 50 and 51 chap. and Isaiah 44 and 45.

‡ Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew poetry.

foretold should be seen ; that the pure religion of Jehovah should be partially known and acknowledged by the Egyptians.

That all these changes and calamities have befallen those ancient and celebrated states, we are as well assured, as we can be of any thing that our own eyes have not seen. Generations preceding us have successively left their reports, and these—at least, as to the present condition of these once flourishing countries—are confirmed by an host of modern travellers.

Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful king of Babylon, invaded Phœnicia and besieged the city of Tyre thirteen years—the inhabitants fled with the principal part of their property to the neighbouring islands—but there they did not “find a quiet settlement”—they were still persecuted by their enemy. After seventy years, they again possessed their city, and “returned to their merchandise.” Again it became rich, and fell into the hands of the merciless Alexander. He put eight thousand of the inhabitants to the sword—crucified two thousand, and sold thirty thousand for slaves to the Jews and others. By means of the Jews who lived among them, many became “converts to their true religion.” In the time of our Saviour, we hear of many coming from “the coasts of Tyre and Sidon” to hear him preach “and to be healed of their diseases.” But the temporal glory of Tyre, never recovered from the blow inflicted by Alexander. She has often changed her masters, and—such as she is—is now subject to the Turks ; “a place only for fishers to dry their nets upon”—her walls are a heap of ruins, and her shores whitened by the winds and waves—the remains of her stately structures afford only a mean shelter to a few wretched fishermen !

Egypt is the most ancient kingdom of any note, although her antiquity is not so high as has been pretended. But she flourished in wealth and wisdom so early as the days of Joseph, and to this day there remain the most magnificent monuments of her power. Yet Egypt has verified the words of Ezekiel—it has been for ages a base kingdom, and has had no prince of its own : for from the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar to this day, it has been “tributary to strangers.” It is now (says Bishop Newton)

a great deal above two thousand years since this prophecy was first delivered; and what likelihood or appearance was there, that the Egyptians should for so many years bow unto a foreign yoke, and never in all that time be able to recover their liberty, and have a prince of their own to reign over them? But, as is the prophecy, so is the event. For not long afterwards, Egypt was conquered by the Babylonians, and after the Babylonians by the Persians; and after the Persians it became subject to the Macedonians, and after the Macedonians to the Romans, and after the Romans to the Saracens, and then to the Mamelukes, and is now a province of the Ottoman empire."

But it is also said by the prophet that a great prince should be sent by God, to deliver Egypt from the Persians, and that peace and plenty should be restored for a time, and that the true religion should be known in that country. These things came to pass under Alexander the Great and some of the Ptolemies, his successors. Many of the Jews dwelt in Egypt at this time, and were highly favoured by the prince. They were allowed to exercise their own faith, and even to build a temple after the model of that in Jerusalem. By these means the Hebrew religion became so honourable in Egypt, that a translation of their scriptures was made into the Greek language, under the auspices of the king. This translation is called the Septuagint, because it is said to have been made by *Seventy* or *Seventy-two* learned Jews.

Historians are not agreed as to the precise time when Nineveh was destroyed; but the fact is incontrovertible.

Charles. You can at least tell us, mother, who was the barbarian, who could destroy such a wonderful city.

Mother. The barbarians are believed to have been the Medes and Babylonians. These heathen warriors were not restrained by humanity when they were tempted by a rich prize. One so splendid as Nineveh was seldom offered to their ambition. That city is supposed to have existed about an hundred and fifty years after their temporary penitence on the preaching of Jonah. The circumstances of its capture and destruction are related by profane historians, and correspond with the prediction of Nahum.

But neither the time nor the instruments are of importance to us: we know that Nineveh once existed—that it was immensely great, and that it is now so completely swept away, “that its place is not known!” Who now, when the curiosity and enterprise of man has penetrated almost every spot on the surface of the globe—who is he that has seen those mighty walls that encircled sixty miles—whose height was one hundred feet, with fifteen hundred towers of two hundred feet in height, and so broad that three chariots could drive abreast upon them—or who can say that he has discovered even the spot where once they stood?

Of the site of Babylon, “the glory of the kingdoms,” “the golden city,” there is almost as much uncertainty! Heaps of ruins are found on the Euphrates, where it is believed she held her proud domain; but whether they are the remains of her superb edifices, or of some other ancient city, cannot now be ascertained. The place, however, is “the resort of doleful creatures,” according to the prophecy. “The Arabian cannot pitch his tent there, neither can the Shepherd make his fold there!”

Fanny. Was the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, the destruction spoken of by the prophets?

Mother. It may be dated from that time, because that was the commencement of its ruin. “After this (Bishop Newton says) it never more recovered its ancient splendour: from an imperial, it became a tributary city; from being governed by its own kings, it came itself to be governed by strangers; and the seat of empire being transferred to Shushan, it decayed by degrees, until it was reduced at last to utter desolation.”

Xerxes, after Darius, committed great depredations upon the devoted city. Alexander attempted to repair it, and intended to make it the seat of his empire, but his death put an end to this project. A few years afterwards, Seleucia was built in its neighbourhood, and Babylon soon became wholly desolate.

Fanny. Were these nations destroyed solely for their oppression of the Jews?

Mother. No, certainly—that is assigned as one cause, but their vices, independently of that, were sufficiently

enormous to subject them to the severest vengeance of Heaven. Babylon, and Assyria, were especially the enemies of God's people. The one subverted the kingdom of Israel and carried away the ten tribes; and the other carried the two tribes of Judah into captivity. Of Nineveh, the prophet Nahum said—"All that hear the bruit of thee, shall clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually." Nor were they less cruel to one another. One hundred and sixty years after the prophecy of Isaiah, and fifty-six after a similar prediction by Jeremiah, when Babylon was taken the second time by the Medes and Persians, in consequence of their rebellion against their masters, and after a siege of twenty months—the exasperated victor, in revenge of their protracted opposition, ordered three thousand of the principal citizens to be crucified! (B. C. 516.)

Catherine. Every act of Supreme Wisdom must have an end: but I do not see what good purpose could be effected by predictions concerning these nations, inasmuch as not being delivered to themselves, they could not operate in bringing them to repentance.

Mother. The light of nature without the aid of prophecy, might have restrained their gross immorality. Reason was not uncultivated amongst them; they had poets, historians and philosophers;* and if they were ignorant of the prophecies, it was in some measure their own fault. They had always much intercourse with the inhabitants of Palestine, both before and after the captivity, and many of the latter were scattered throughout Egypt, and the Assyrian empire; so that they were not without opportunities of knowing the true God, and his denunciations against their impiety. Nor are these casual privileges alone their accusers. In the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, fifty-six years before Babylon was taken by Cyrus, Jeremiah sent a long and circumstantial prophecy against Chaldea to that people, by the hand of Seraiah, the chamberlain of the palace, who was going thither on public business—commanding him to read it

* Herodotus and Thucydides were cotemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah.

aloud to them, and then binding it to a stone, to cast it into the Euphrates, as a type of their fall, to rise no more! But to us who have lived to see Tyre in ruins, and the mighty Babylon swept away—the prophecies are inestimable! for to us, they establish the credibility of the messengers whose chief errand was of far higher moment: and in their cotemporaries, who had not this advantage, the same confidence was inspired by a multitude of predictions whose accomplishment they witnessed.

Catherine. Some things however were foretold—such as the immediate death of Hezekiah, and the destruction of Nineveh in forty days, which did not come to pass; were not such failures calculated to disturb their faith in prophecies?

Mother. Not at all; because the denunciation in these instances was clearly conditional; and must rather be considered as threatenings of the penalty incurred by Hezekiah and the Ninevites, than as absolute decrees. We may be sure that the design was to awaken them to a sense of their guilt, because we are told that the evil was averted by their penitence and their prayers. Whatsoever is determined by Him who has the uncontrolled power to execute, must assuredly come to pass, because liability to change would argue imperfection in Deity: a supposition altogether inadmissible. The absolute decrees of the great Supreme may exercise our faith, but “*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,*” is to us the practical admonition.

Catherine. The events you have related are certainly the fullest evidence of the authenticity of the Scriptures; and to the witnesses and the actors, must have carried conviction. But to us, they are like a dream. The great length of time that has elapsed since their occurrence has a tendency to weaken their effect on the mind—and it is yet more unfortunate, that an opportunity is thereby afforded for the assertion, that the fact was antecedent to the prophecy.

Mother. Such, indeed, is the feeble constitution of our nature; but the abundance of testimony completely refutes the objection; whilst to us, the fleeting images of the dream, which we are sure did once exist, are continu-

ally restored by the hourly accomplishment of other prophecies before our own eyes. We are more highly favoured than the persons were to whom they were originally delivered; for, besides the authentic record of the events which they saw, we have the addition of facts unknown to them. The generations which succeed us, will see still further into the scheme of Providence in the government of this changing world, by witnessing occurrences, which we know will come—but “the time is not yet.”

Fanny. Did you observe, mother, what was said by Dr. W—— a few Sundays ago, about the fulfilment of a prophecy concerning the Kenites? I did not fully understand him, and have since neglected to ask an explanation.

Mother. As it is directly to our purpose, I will here relate it.

There is a prophecy in the thirty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah, concerning the Rechabites, which would be passed over by common readers, without particular notice, because they make no figure in sacred writ, and we had lost all knowledge of that people. The Rechabites, or Kenites, as they are also called, were descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses. They had been commanded by their father Jonadab, “to drink no wine, to build no houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any; but all their days to dwell in tents.” For their obedience to this command, they were promised by Jeremiah that they should not be scattered and lost among the nations—(as very many other tribes have been) in these words: “Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.” This tribe lived in the desert of Arabia, and is supposed to have embraced the Jewish religion. Niebuhr and Wolfe speak of them as still in existence, still living in tents—and practising some of the Mosaic rites.

Here, you see, is one instance among many, of the truth of prophecy. But need we look farther than the actual condition of the Jewish nation at this day, so precisely accordant with the declaration of the prophets?

Moses, on the banks of the Jordan, before their entrance into Canaan, reminded them of their repeated “covenant with God, to keep his commandments, and his statutes,

because he had taken them to be a *peculiar* people, and had made them high above all nations in praise, and in name, and in honour," and most affectingly enumerated the various blessings which should follow their obedience. But if they did turn aside from their God, that then, the reverse of all these blessings should come to pass, and in the end, that they should "be rooted out of their land, and strangers should possess it—that they should be scattered among all people upon the face of the earth—that among these they should find no ease, but should be only oppressed and crushed always, and that these plagues should be of long continuance." (*Deut.* 28.)

These terrible words of Moses, together with many others of the same import, were spoken three thousand years ago, and the same things were afterwards predicted by later prophets. Seven hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, Hosea said, "the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." Now here are prophecies that have been fulfilling for eighteen hundred years—and are daily fulfilling. The Israelites have been rooted out of their own land,—they have been dispersed into all the nations—there is no inhabited place where they are not found, nor have they lived in "ease" and honour anywhere. The very soul is sickened at the histories of their sufferings. Thousands and millions of these injured people have been destroyed by the cruelty and rapacity of their rulers, so that had they not been most signally preserved, a standing miracle to the world, the very name of a Jew would now be like that of Amalek, "blotted out from under heaven!" They have, too, been many days without a king and without a sacrifice—everywhere subordinate, they have no government of their own, nor can they have the full exercise of their religion, whilst Jerusalem, the only place where their solemn feasts may be held, remains in the hands of their enemies.

Fanny. The preservation of the Jews under circumstances so unfavourable, would seem plainly to indicate some illustrious design, yet to be accomplished.

Mother. No one who believes the words of Holy Writ, entertains any doubt on that subject. They themselves

are supported by the prospect of glorious days, to the stock of Abraham. Jeremiah, who lived in the decline of the Hebrew State, and whilst the divine judgments were suspended, consoles them in this encouraging language—"Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for *I am* with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure." "I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid." By the evangelical prophet Isaiah, they have a multitude of most splendid promises. All the beauty and magnificence of nature are employed as emblematical of their future peace and security. They have therefore abundant reason to trust in him who has said—"For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord; the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." "I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations"—"And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever."

Catherine. What is meant by the promise that *David* should be their prince for ever?

Mother. It is not to be supposed, that the name of David in this place is to be literally understood; that David, the son of Jesse, is to be raised from the dead to become again the prince of Israel. We must then seek an explanation in the figurative style of the prophetic writings; and your question introduces us easily to another branch of prophecy, and to that which was its chief object, the promise of the Messiah.

The divine Mediator between God and man, the Lord

Jesus Christ, was to proceed from the Hebrew nation, and was first to preach his gospel to them. Hence it was proper that such an expectation should be kept up amongst them—and hence also it was proper, that amongst them, the prophets in succession should arise—for “to Him give all the prophets witness.” Before the calling of Abraham from the Gentiles, the Redeemer had been revealed to Adam, and the patriarchs ; but in language so obscure, that their conceptions of the extent of the blessing were probably very imperfect. Advancing in time, revelations become more lucid—the clouds disperse, and the “Sun of righteousness,” in his nature, his person and his offices, is in their view.

After the separation of Abraham, that patriarch was told that in *his posterity all the nations of the earth should be blessed*—thus intimating the incarnate nature of the Messiah. If he descended from the human family, he must partake of human nature, whilst the vast extent of the promised blessing would seem beyond the utmost powers of a mere mortal to bestow. In the prophetic discourse of Jacob, just before his death, he names his son Judah, as he, from whose tribe the blessing should descend. Balaam speaks in general terms of the *Star*, that should arise out of Jacob. David describes him as a *man*, afflicted, persecuted, and forsaken by his God—and again, as “exalted to the right hand of the Omnipotent,” “a priest *forever*, after the order of Melchisedek”—as the Son of the Most High, having the whole earth for a possession. Other particulars are successively disclosed. Bethlehem is designated as the place of his birth, and the very year of his public appearance is pointed out. In the reign of Hezekiah, or about that period, Micah says—“But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting !” And during the captivity, the prophet Daniel declares, at the end of seventy weeks from the commission to Ezra to rebuild the temple, that is, according to the prophetic mode of computation, taking each day for a year—at the end of four hundred and

ninety years,* “the Messiah should come”—“the Most Holy should be anointed,” “should be cut off, but not for himself.” And Haggai and Malachi, the last of the prophets, encouraging the Jews to proceed with spirit in rebuilding the temple, declare, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts,” “for the Lord whom they sought should suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant!”

Besides this series of historical revelation, innumerable are the passages, which supported the hope of Israel. Sometimes they were literal; sometimes metaphorical. Of the former, is that splendid description by Isaiah, who, for the number and explicitness of his prophecies concerning the Messiah, has been called the evangelical prophet.—Speaking of the glory of his kingdom, he says, “the people that walketh in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” “For, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.”

The whole religious ritual of the Jews was a metaphorical representation of the death and atonement of Jesus Christ. Both the patriarchal and mosaical dispensations were preparatory to that which he should introduce. Distinguished men were therefore raised up from time to time, to be *types* or representatives of him. *David* was one of these, and one of the most eminent. Hence the application of his name in the passage which occasioned your question, and in many others, to that august personage.

Moses was another illustrious type of the Messiah. In his last address to the Israelites, he promised them a future

* See Prideaux, part 1. Book 5. where it is shown that this prophecy was exactly fulfilled to the very year and month.

prophet like unto himself, resembling him in many respects, but in one characteristic so remarkable as at once to justify the application. "The Lord your God (said he) will raise up unto you a prophet like unto me—*according to all that thou desiredst* of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the Assembly, saying, *Let me not hear again the voice* of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more that I die not." When the Israelites were brought into the immediate presence of the Deity to receive the written law, and the insupportable emblems of his wrath shook the earth under their feet, and burst in tremendous lightnings from the mountain; overcome with terror they intreated, that they might not any more hear the voice of Omnipotence, but that a *Mediator* might interpose to declare all his will. Moses became that mediator, and thus he was the most illustrious type of that "prophet who should be raised up like unto him."

In addition to these two classes of prophecy, or such as directly foretold a specified event, and such as spoke in symbols, in conformity to the genius of the oriental nations—there is yet a third, which are to be understood in what is called a double sense; that is, they relate primarily to one person, or event, and remotely to another; they are descriptive of both, but not so perfectly, as to admit of an exclusive application to either.

Catherine. Examples of these would assist our discernment when we read for ourselves.

Mother. In a vast variety of instances, the future peace of the Christian church, is prefigured in promises to the Jewish nation, under the titles of the house of Jacob—Jerusalem—Zion—and the mountain of the House of the Lord, in allusion to the temple which stood on Mount Zion. Glorious days are promised to them when Israel and Judah shall be collected from the four quarters of the globe, in such language as this:

"Lo! these shall come from afar

"And lo! these from the north and the west,

"And these from the land of Sinim.

"Sing aloud, O ye heavens; and rejoice, O earth;

"Ye mountains burst forth into song:

“For Jéhovah hath comforted his people,
 “And will have compassion on his afflicted.”*

Such superlative pictures of the final glory of Israel, can only be referred to that time when they, with all other nations, shall submit to the sceptre of the Redeemer, and the Millennium of the Christian church shall embrace the whole earth. The splendid passages which foretel the great prosperity of the Jews, after their deliverance from Babylon by the Persian prince, the destruction and complete subjugation of their enemies to the very people whom they had oppressed, were never fully realized. They are not yet made “an eternal excellency;” “a joy of many generations.” These predictions must therefore be referred, in analogy to the whole scheme of revelation, in a secondary sense to the glorious reign of the gospel; when both Jews and Gentiles shall be one church under Jesus Christ the *deliverer*—when his disciples shall be released, both from the Mosaic ritual, and from the guilt and bondage of sin. “These two events” (says the elegant translator of Isaiah) “the prophet connects together, and hardly ever treats of the former, without throwing in some intimations of the latter. Nay, sometimes, he is so fully possessed with the glories of the remoter kingdom under the Messiah, that he seems almost to lose sight of the more immediate object of his mission.”

Catherine. I do not know how the Jews understand the prophecies—of course it must be differently from our interpretation.

Mother. With respect to all those which predict the calamities which should come upon their nation for its sins, they agree with us—and admit, that they are under them to this day. These having corresponded to the very letter of the predictions—they maintain, that the promises of pardon and recompense, when their punishment has come to an end—must be as literal. They reject the spiritual sense assigned to many of them by christian commentators, and altogether the double sense, in which we believe some to have been spoken. The Messiah, so specially promised to their fathers, they believe will be a

* See Lowth's translation of Isaiah, Chap. 49.

temporal Prince, who will bring them from all the nations where they are scattered, and signally punish their oppressors—that he will rebuild their Temple, establish their nation in more glory than it knew under any former king, and that Peace, both perfect and universal, will then bless the earth. Now, say they, these things are all plainly foretold by the prophets—and since they did not come to pass, at the advent of Jesus Christ—he was not the promised Messiah. They confidently expect another who will verify to them the words of Isaiah, which we apply to the future state of the Christian church.

“Thus saith the Lord Jehovah :

Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations :

And to the people will I exalt my signal ;

And they shall bring thy sons in their bosom,

And thy daughters shall be borne on their shoulders ;

And kings shall be thy foster-fathers,

And their queens thy nursing mothers :

With their faces to the earth they shall bow down unto thee,

And shall lick the dust of thy feet ;

And thou shalt know, that I am JEHOVAH,

And that they who trust in him, shall not be ashamed.”

JOB.

Fanny. Mother, you have now finished the Old Testament, without once mentioning the Book of Job. You have, I believe, named every other,—why did you omit that?

Mother. The Book of Job was omitted, because it is wholly unconnected with the history of which we have spoken. Job was not a Jew, nor does he appear to have known any thing of that people, but rather to have lived some ages before that people became a nation.

Fanny. Why, then, is his story inserted amongst the sacred writings, which are chiefly devoted to their affairs.

Mother. By the *sacred writings*, we do not mean merely such books as were connected with the Jewish history, but all the inspired books which have come down to us; and considering the scrupulous care that has been most religiously devoted to their preservation, it may be presumed that we now possess all that did ever bear the sacred stamp. We have histories of the Jews by some profane authors, and frequent allusions to them by others. We read of "*the Book of Jasher*," "*the Book of Iddo the seer*," and "*the Book of the wars of the Lord*;" these were historical, but probably not inspired; otherwise, they would not have been lost, as they now certainly are. But this sublime poem has been treasured up with the sacred rolls of the Jews from the earliest period of their written history, and is transmitted with them for our instruction. It has all the marks of divine inspiration; its views of the Deity are the most elevated, and its moral sentiments the most pure: we conclude, then, that it was delivered to them by their revered legislator, from whom alone, perhaps, they would have received a rule of faith and manners.

Catherine. By whom was it written?

Mother. That is a question which divides commentators. Some have assigned it to Moses, and some to Job himself. Some have supposed it to have been written by Elihu, one of the actors in the drama, whilst others have not scrupled to bring it down so late as the time of Ezra; but so various are the opinions on this uncertain subject, that still others, and intermediate persons, between the first and the last named, are supported as the authors.

No book of Scripture has been more severely scrutinized than this. The reality of Job's existence, the period and the place in which he lived, as well as the pen to which we are indebted for this portion of his story, have been all made the subjects of very able discussion. The time and the design of its publication have also been examined. Some writers, more fanciful than wise, have imagined the whole book to be an allegory or fable, agreeably to the eastern mode of giving lessons. Whilst others, with more reason, defend the literal truth of every circumstance related, admitting, however, that the dialogue is ornamented by the florid language, without which a conversation could not have been reduced to measured numbers consistently with the elegance required in an epic poem. But all these disputed points are put to rest by the successful labours of commentators* all competent to the work. It is not necessary that I should rehearse all the arguments on either side,—an abstract on each particular will prepare you to read their works, and to study the sublime original. I shall only premise, that it is allowed on all hands to be a poem of the most lofty character, excepting the first two and the last chapters, which are plain narrative, and that it is replete with instruction.

Catherine. On what ground is the reality of his existence questioned, when the patience of Job is proposed as an example by the apostle James?†

Mother. Objections are made to the transactions related in the exordium. That the adversary of mankind

* Gray, Magee, Peters, Horne, &c.

† James v. 11.

should have appeared with the "sons of God" before the throne of the Omnipotent, and have obtained permission to bring a succession of calamities beyond the common lot of mortals, on a righteous man, say the objectors, appears fabulous, and the protraction of the patriarch's days to the amount of a hundred and forty years after his trial, is inconsistent with the abridgment of man's life after the flood, for that he lived after that catastrophe is evident from the text.

Now the experience of every age, in accordance with the words of inspiration, is sufficient proof that the patience and resignation of the most pious are often severely tried by affliction. That Satan may be the agent, is also clear. He tempted Eve in Paradise, and our Saviour in the wilderness; but in what manner he obtains his commission, or what takes place in the celestial regions respecting this awful arrangement, is amongst the secret things of God, which we are not permitted to know. If the fact is to be communicated to mortals, it must be done in some way compatible with human comprehension. Hence Satan is represented as appearing in the court of the Most High, and obtaining leave to try the faith of one who was honoured with the appellation of "a perfect and upright man." Another argument against the reality of the whole story is assumed from its metaphorical style, in the debate between Job and his companions. In answer to this, it is not necessary to contend that every word is related as it was spoken, although much may be allowed to the known figurative style of Arabia, the country in which the scene is laid. If the sentiments are preserved, the dignified form into which the poem is cast, does not impugn the reality of the events. Besides, to the testimony of an apostle, we have added that of a prophet, (Ezekiel, xiv. 14.,) concerning the existence of such a man as Job. And with respect to the number of his years, they did not so far exceed that of other patriarchs (considering too that he was but young at the date of his trial) that we may not suppose him to have been favoured with an extraordinary length of life, as a reward of his pious fortitude, and a gracious compensation for his extraordinary sufferings.

Job is called "the greatest of all the men of the East," by the inspired historian. "The whole region between Egypt and the Euphrates, was called the East, at first in respect to Egypt, and afterwards absolutely, and without any relation to situation or circumstances."* He dwelt in the land of Uz, which is said to be a district of Arabia, lying between Egypt and Philistia. Having discovered the place of Job's residence, there is no difficulty in ascertaining the period at which he flourished. The whole complexion of the book in question bears the mark of high antiquity. He was the priest of his own family, according to patriarchal custom, and offered sacrifices for his children and his friends; consequently he lived before the institution of a regular priesthood by Moses, to which alone belonged this privilege after the promulgation of the law. He offered them at his own dwelling, whereas the Levites, as you know, might sacrifice only at the consecrated tabernacle. Had there been a law, the acknowledged piety of Job would have restrained him from transgressing it. His wealth is reckoned by his flocks—he had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, besides an immense herd of cattle: he therefore led a pastoral life—the earliest occupation of man.

Our Bible chronology dates the trial of Job about twenty-nine years before the Exodus from Egypt. That there is no allusion to such a nation as the Israelites, or their peculiar system, to the miracles by which they were delivered from the cruel hand of Pharaoh, or by which they were sustained forty years in a desert, is abundant evidence that he lived anterior to these wonderful events. Their number, and their notoriety, must have reached the ears of those who lived in the very neighbourhood where they occurred. Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain, lay still nearer to the land of Uz—all the people of Idumea must have known of their miraculous ruin, yet none of all these most remarkable transactions are mentioned in the conversation between Job and his companions—a conversation which turning chiefly on

* Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Bible.

the power of God, and the manner of his dealings with the children of men, afforded an opportunity so favourable, that they must have been noticed had they taken place before that time. It is also observable, that all these men, though coming from different parts of Arabia, spoke the same language, the original Hebrew; from which it would appear, that they conversed together on this memorable occasion before it was corrupted into different dialects by the posterity of Abraham.

It is well known that of all the various forms by which the true religion was debased, amongst the most ancient was the worship of the sun and moon; and to this alone is there any allusion in the book of Job.

From these, and other arguments, the high antiquity of this incomparable book is completely proved. Horne, a late writer of great erudition, collecting them all—concludes the time of Job to have been eight hundred and eighteen years after the deluge, and one hundred and eighty-four before the birth of Abraham, which would carry it back some ages beyond the date in our common Bibles. But it is a nicer point to determine by whom this interesting story was written. It may have been the work of Job himself, but the thirty-second chapter affords a strong presumption that Elihu was the author. Moses having found it during his long exile in Midian, might deliver it to his rebellious people in the desert, as a corrective of their unthankful temper, and an encouragement to submission, by the rewards that are there held out to quiet suffering.

Catherine. It would then appear that this is the oldest book in the world, even more ancient than the Pentateuch. I should now be glad to have some account of the argument which is beyond my present comprehension. I hope it will not be always so, but that I may hereafter obtain a better knowledge, both of this and every other part of sacred writ.

Mother. I am only able to give you a general view of a composition so magnificent: although it contains instruction the most obvious, it is yet veiled to the most illustrious scholars, by our imperfect knowledge of the eastern

idioms, and by the transcendent nature of the subject. The God of nature is discovered in his works. We see—we feel—we admire and adore! Much is given to exercise the intellectual faculties of man, but much more is exalted beyond his best attainments. Of his justice and his mercy we see the effects in his moral government, but we are often lost in conjecture when we attempt to scan the reason of his dispensations. These high matters were the chief subject of debate between Job and his disputatious friends. Guided only by the light of nature and tradition, and destitute of the revelation with which we are favoured, although they often “spoke amiss,” it is yet surprising that they were in general so correct.

Job was a man of great eminence, a prince perhaps, or a magistrate in the land of Uz. Endowed with wisdom, wealth, and virtue, he was revered by every class of society. His children had grown to maturity, and misfortune had not violated his dwelling. Encompassed by all the blessings of domestic and social life, he seemed almost beyond its reach. But suddenly he is bereft of all! Neighbouring bands of roving Chaldeans overrun his fields—his flocks and herds are swept away, and the shepherds and ploughmen put to the sword! Scarcely had these disasters reached his ears, when the blow is repeated by another messenger. All his children assembled at a feast in their elder brother’s house, are crushed to death in its fall, by a fierce whirlwind! Such a tide of accumulated evils might well have burst the heart of a father, and a man! But in the midst of prosperity Job had prepared his heart for a reverse. Whilst his sons and daughters had gone from house to house at some festive season, the pious patriarch had “risen early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all.” “It may be,” said he, “that my sons have sinned in a moment of intemperance, and blasphemed their Creator.” Thus he stood ready to submit to the divine will, in that beautiful ascription to his unquestioned sovereignty, which fell without a murmur from his lips. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away—Blessed be the name of the Lord.” But this was not all—the saint was to be yet further

proved. He is smitten with "sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown!" His wife, who seems not to have borne affliction with the same placid temper, was astonished that he should yet confide in Jehovah—but he silenced her: "What," said he, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not evil?" "In all this," adds the historian, "Job sinned not with his lips." Happy would it be for you and me, who have the assured hope of rejoining our pious friends after death, could we give them up with the same obedient spirit.

Fanny. Was he altogether without that consoling hope?

Mother. By some it has been supposed that he was. By others, his belief in a future state of glory, through the intercession of a Redeemer, is supposed to be clearly marked in some sentences, which he afterwards uttered. Be this as it may, his subdued disposition is entitled to the highest praise. And in this happy state of mind, it is probable he would have remained had he been left to himself. But that serenity which the heavy hand of God had never moved, was disturbed by man, less merciful—and less just. Such unparalleled calamity was soon spread far and wide throughout Arabia, and three men, his particular friends, Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz, all men of rank in Idumea, came together to condole with him. They had heard of the loss of his immense property—the death of all his children—and of his own agonizing disease—but when they approached him, whom they had seen seated in the gate dispensing the law—the most honourable in all the land—"before whom the princes refrained talking, and the nobles held their peace—in whose presence the aged arose, and the young men shrunk away," when they now saw him stretched upon the earth, a loathsome spectacle from which his own domestics turned away—amazement, grief, and horror, struck them dumb—they sate down by him on the ground, and for days and nights no one broke the solemn silence of unutterable wo! In this interval of meditation, the sympathy of pitying friendship gave way to the cooler dictates of erroneous reason. They were themselves virtuous and had flourished in uninter-

ed joy—they were not overwhelmed by misery in every torturing shape like the wretched Job—piety in them had found a rich reward—whence then the uncommon weight of wo that had befallen him? Surely, they concluded, his religion was but a vain pretence, and the hypocrite was now exposed by the just judgment of a righteous Ruler. When, therefore, the sufferer at length broke out into a passionate lamentation, even execrating the day he first beheld the light—they advised him to confess his secret sins, and thus conciliate an offended God! Conscious of the integrity of a well-spent life, he firmly pleads his innocence. This they refused to admit, his unsullied reputation notwithstanding. A dialogue then ensues, in which the *comforters* contend, that the wicked only are punished, whilst the upright are protected, and crowned with temporal blessings. “Remember,” they say, “who ever perished, being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? They that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.” They even cruelly intimate, that his children had sinned, and were cut off for their transgressions. They magnify the divine attributes, they contend that God is just. “Happy is the man,” says Eliphaz, “whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” He accuses Job, whose wisdom and benevolence had heretofore supported others, of weakness in sinking under his own calamity. “Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest.” So hard is it to judge of that which experience has not made us feel! Zophar reproves him for vindicating his own righteousness, against the justice of the Great Supreme. “God,” said he, “exacteth less of thee than thine iniquity deserveth.” But the sufferer answers—“To him that is afflicted, pity should be shown from his friends”—he desires only death—“even that it would please God to destroy him—to be hidden in the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Where the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor.” He confesses his own unworthiness and the absolute power of Jehovah,

but inasmuch as he is nothing in His hands, he expostulates with Him on His excessive rigour—and complains that vice and virtue are not distinguished in His administration.

Zophar reproves him harshly for attempting to know the mind of the Omnipotent, and for vindicating himself: again accuses him of unknown crimes, and beseeches him to repent. Exasperated, at length, by the unfeeling acrimony of his accusers, while yet they lay no specific sin to his charge, Job ridicules their affected wisdom, as if he were ignorant, who had been their teacher!—"Miserable comforters," cried he, "are ye all!" He pathetically laments his altered state, and entreats their compassion. "Have pity upon me—have pity upon me, O ye my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me!" But in vain he asks their pity, and in vain he contrasts his fallen state with the days when the light of God shined on his tabernacle. "When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me," he cries, "when the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him—the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy: the cause which I knew not I searched out." In vain he calls upon them to attest the active usefulness and integrity of his whole life, recounting, eloquently, his deeds of justice and of charity. In vain he contends, "that the wicked are often prosperous all their days;" that "they are reserved to the day of destruction;" and confidently invokes the wrath of his Omniscient Judge, if he had gloried in his wealth, or had perverted his power or his possessions to the purposes of pride or oppression—or if he had been betrayed into idolatry, when he "beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness;" and ardently desires that the Almighty would appear, and permit him to plead his cause in His presence!

Argument and asseveration were alike lost on his hard-hearted accusers. Unmoved by the pathetic appeal of their suffering friend, and still persuaded that he had en-

joyed an unmerited reputation, yet unable to name the turpitude they suspected, and displeased that they could not drive him to a voluntary confession of his guilt, they are at length silent. Elihu, then, who seems to have joined the company while they were engaged in conversation,—because he is not named in the beginning,—and who had not yet spoken, now arose; and, after apologizing for his interference, because he “was young and they were very old,” he declares that he had listened attentively to the debate, and had discovered that “great men are not always wise, neither do the aged always judge correctly,” evidently reproving the pretended friends for the severity with which they had irritated the virtuous patriarch. He then turns to Job, and tells him, that he had erred in justifying himself rather than God; that by affirming himself to be altogether perfect, he had arraigned the wisdom and the justice of the Sovereign; that virtue could not entitle a creature to exemption from calamity, because it could not profit the self-sufficient Creator; that the counsels of God are not to be developed by finite man, but his chastisements are to be received with humility; that the righteous and the prosperous are afflicted to remind them of their dependence on the Great Supreme. “If they obey and serve him,” he adds, “they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure.” He speaks in glowing terms of the magnificence of the Creator’s works, and admonishes Job to reverence the Deity.

From the language of Elihu, he would seem to be the author of the whole narrative. In the introduction to his speech, he says—“When *I* had waited,” (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more,) “*I said, I* will answer my part, *I* will also show mine opinion;” thus speaking in the first person, whereas the other speakers are always quoted in the third.

When Elihu had ceased speaking, then comes the most majestic part of the poem, a conclusion that cannot be surpassed in grandeur. “The Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind.” This is mysterious language to us, nor do we pretend to know how the Invisible Spirit spoke to man. A voice, probably, was heard in the whirlwind, and words

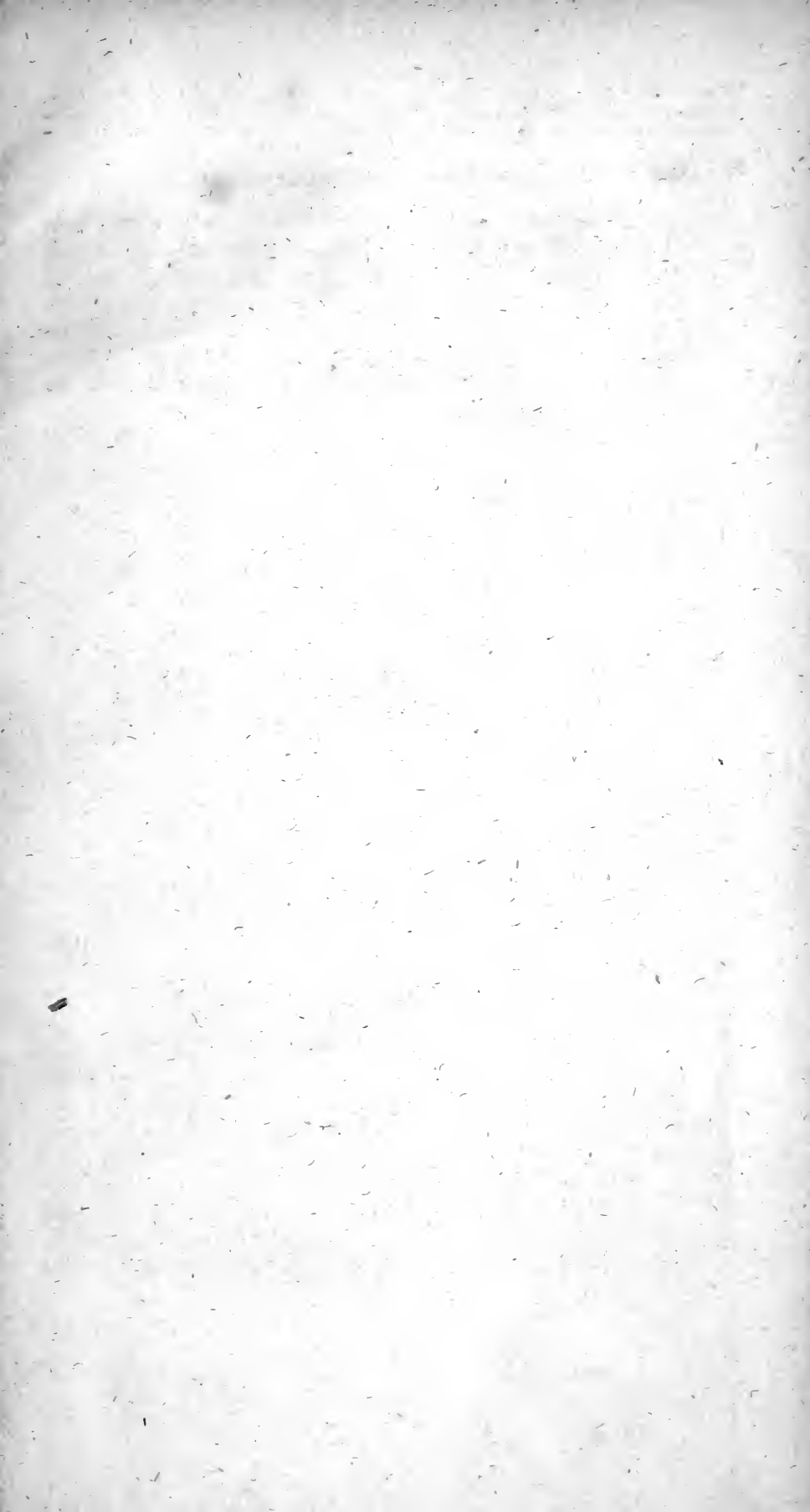
were pronounced becoming a Deity to utter. Job is reproved for presuming to scan the moral government of God, the meanest of whose works he cannot understand. He is called upon to contemplate the works of creation, and see if he is able to imitate the least of them. "Where wast thou," (it is asked) "when I laid the foundations of the earth?"—"when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy—when the bars and the doors of the unfathomable deep were set," and the raging floods were restrained by the high command.—"Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." He asks, if man can control the paths of light or darkness: can he direct the stars in their annual round, or set limits to their dominion? Thunders, and lightnings, and clouds, and rain, and hail, and ice, and snow, are all arrayed in grand succession, to show the astonished auditors their comparative impotence. Descending from the firmament the august speaker continues to display his transcendent attributes in a few specimens, though but very few indeed, of animated matter—the eagle who mounts on high at His command—the peacock who proudly spreads his glittering plumes, and the young raven "who cries to God for food—the wild goat that leaps fearlessly from the craggy rock, and the lion who prowls the forest for his prey—the warlike horse, "whose neck is clothed with thunder," and the stupendous whale, (Leviathan,) "before whom the mighty are afraid,"—All, all, are the work of His hands:—"who, then," He asks, "is able to stand before me?"

This appalling address produces the intended effect,—Job is humbled, and confesses, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee—wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The three friends of the penitent Job are then told, "ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath;" and they are commanded, to go to him, and offer up for themselves a burnt offering—and his prayer for them should be accepted. Job is afterwards

restored to health, and his friends and relations visit him with presents and gratulations. Sons and daughters again bless his dwelling—prosperity, even more affluent than he had enjoyed before his trial, is again bestowed upon him, and a hundred and forty years being added to his life, he lived to instruct four succeeding generations, by the wisdom and the piety which experience had added to his original endowments.

THE END.



DEC 17 1953



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2005

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 241 302 4